

Spring 2009

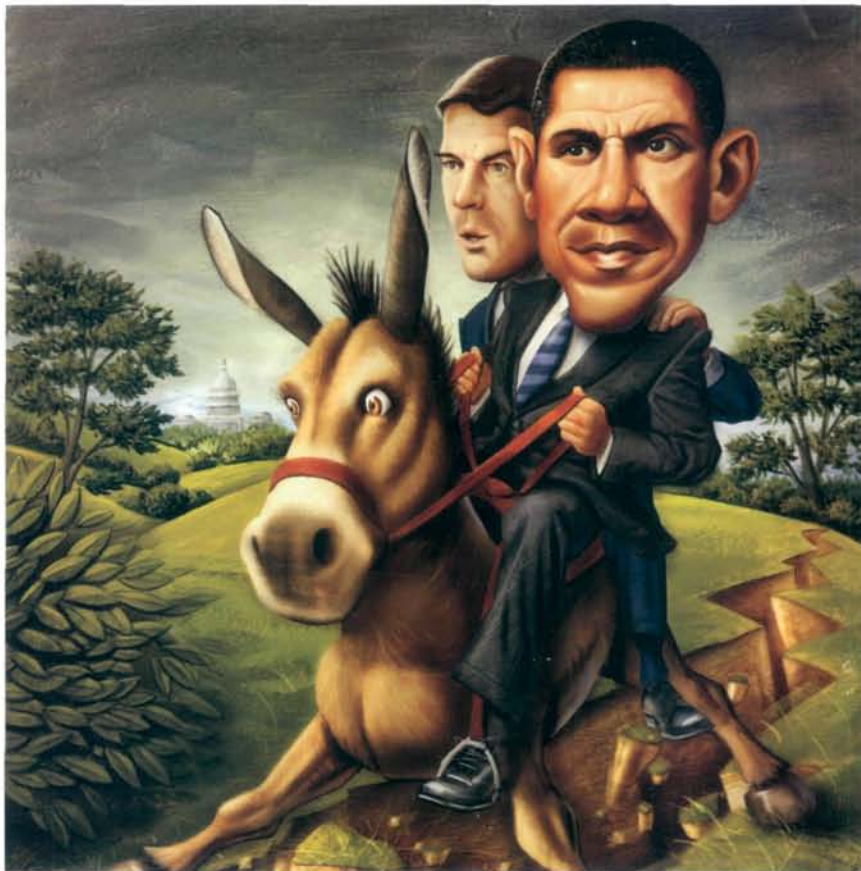
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A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND RESEARCH

Straddling the Gap

Democratic Party schism may challenge Obama

RICHARD LEE COLVIN



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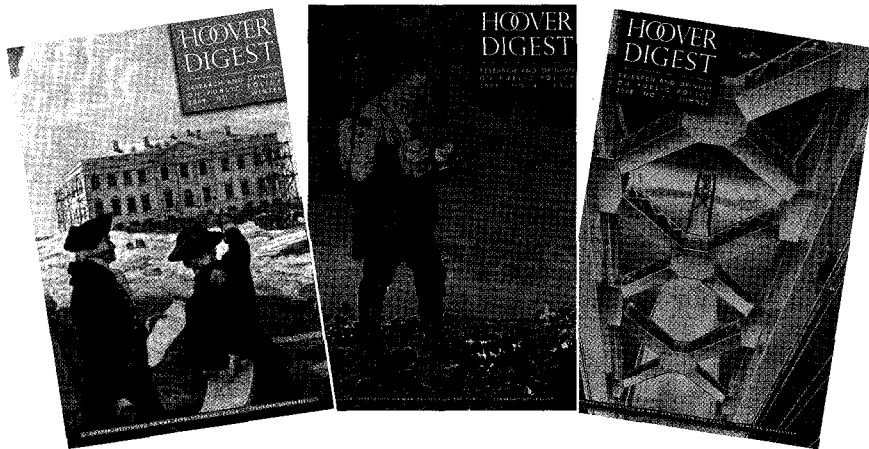
Co-op Schools, Custom Teacher Training, History of KIPP, For-Profit Advantage in Philadelphia, Teachers Retirement, Massachusetts Tosses Ed Reforms

CONTRIBUTORS: JAY MATHEWS, BETH HAWKINS, PAUL PETERSON, ROBERT COSTRELL, MICHAEL PODGURSKY, KATHERINE NEWMAN, CHARLES CHIEPPO, JAMES GASS, CHESTER FINN JR., DEBORAH MEIER, MATTHEW CHINGOS

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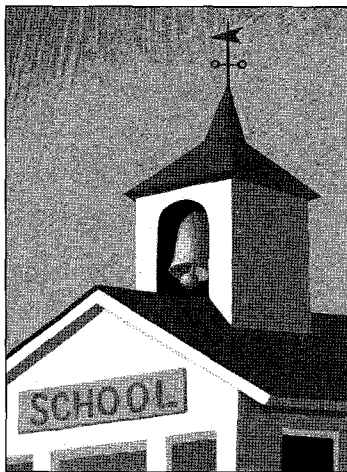
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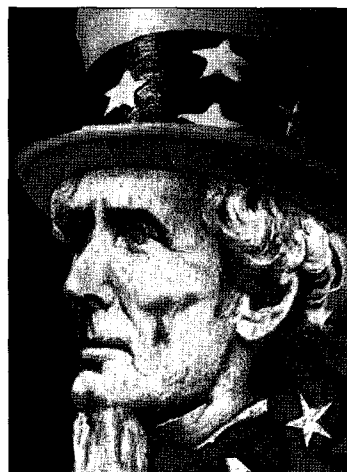
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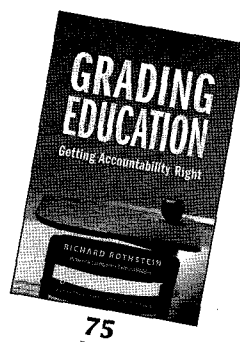
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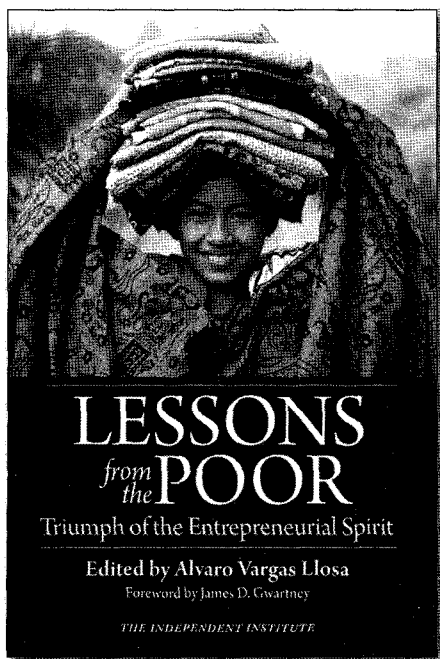
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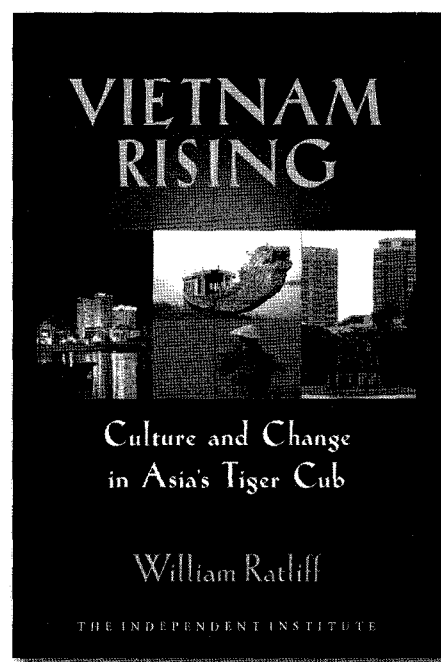
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What Is Good for General Motors...

Is Good for Education

“What is good for the country is good for General Motors—and vice versa,” pronounced proud Charlie Wilson, the former GM chief who became secretary of defense to President Eisenhower.

Now we might say it a bit differently, “If restructuring is necessary for General Motors, it’s no less needed for the country—and its schools.”

For years, our public schools have paid as little attention to personnel costs as General Motors has. Instead, school districts have attempted to enhance student learning (and address many other problems along the way) by hiring more people—more teachers (for smaller classes) and more teacher aides, guidance counselors, bus drivers, lawyers, accountants, special educators, bilingual specialists, and others.

Back in 1950, school districts hired one teacher (or other instructional employee such as an administrator or guidance counselor) for every 19 pupils. The number of pupils per teacher dropped to 14 by 1970, and to just 8 pupils by 2005. If class-size reduction were the solution to America’s education crisis, that crisis would have passed long ago.

It’s not just the size of the instructional staff that has grown relentlessly, however. Clerks, maintenance workers, lunch-room employees, bus drivers, crossing guards, and others too numerous to mention are joining the district payroll. The number of pupils for each support staff member dropped from 58 in 1960 to 43 in 1970, to just 27 in 2005.

All of these folks cost money. Between 1960 and 1975, the amount (in inflation-adjusted dollars) spent nationwide on K–12 education per pupil nearly doubled, rising from \$3,300 to just short of \$6,100. Between 1975 and 2005, expenditures nearly doubled again, to reach \$11,470.

Even those numbers don’t include costs hidden away in pension promises to “instructional personnel,” who are typically

eligible to retire as early as the age of 55. In this issue, Michael Podgursky and Robert Costrell (see “Teacher Retirement Benefits,” *research*, page 58) show that pension benefits for teachers have risen rapidly even in the past four years, outpacing those provided by the private sector by 40 percent.

For years, accounting tricks have kept the long-term fiscal impact of pension promises hidden away, turning pension plans into Ponzi schemes by asking future generations to pay legacy costs that have long been accumulating. Today, however, new accounting rules—similar to those that brought banks and insurance companies to the bankruptcy brink—are forcing states and school districts to acknowledge a reality they have tried to ignore.

As that reality sinks in, education fiscal policy seems destined to change, perhaps dramatically. As more money must be put aside to pay pensions and other legacy costs, the amount available for current expenditures becomes curtailed, just at the time other fiscal challenges are mounting across the board. Any federal government bailout will probably turn out to be no more adequate for schools than for General Motors.

Will the emerging fiscal crisis accelerate the educational crisis that is leaving American students ever further behind the skill level it takes to function in the modern economy?

Or will it provoke a fundamental system restructuring? Will attention shift from satisfying the employee to educating the student? Will teachers be recruited, retained, and compensated in a more rational manner? Will more-focused institutions replace the comprehensive high school? Will technological innovation customize educational offerings? Will students become their own teachers? All such cost-cutting but potentially education-enhancing reforms may be more possible in a time of crisis and deficits than in an age of self-interested self-indulgence.

— Paul E. Peterson

As more money must be put aside to pay pensions and other legacy costs, the amount available for current expenditures becomes curtailed, just at the time other fiscal challenges are mounting across the board.

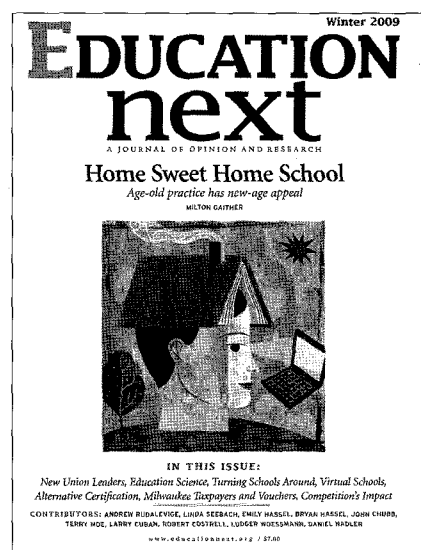
MISSION STATEMENT In the stormy seas of school reform, this journal will steer a steady course, presenting the facts as best they can be determined, giving voice (without fear or favor) to worthy research, sound ideas, and responsible arguments. Bold change is needed in American K–12 education, but *Education Next* partakes of no program, campaign, or ideology. It goes where the evidence points.

Choice Benefits

The most intriguing aspect of the study of the relationship between the proportion of pupils in nongovernment schools and achievement on the PISA international comparisons ("School Choice International," *research*, Winter 2009) is its use of data from 1900 to identify countries with a history of competitive education systems. Almost every country in the world has had a sector of elite private schools for the children of privilege. It is only under a special set of circumstances, however, that a nongovernment sector of schools rivaling public schools in providing popular instruction has developed in some countries. The principal example of this among the Western democracies has been the creation of alternative systems of Catholic schools in countries with a significant Catholic population but a public school system considered by the church hierarchy inappropriate for Catholic children.

This is a history that my own books have traced for dozens of countries, from the perspective of educational freedom and the rights of conscience of parents and their children. West and Woessmann give it a completely new twist, however, showing the significant unanticipated consequences of these developments for the quality of education as measured by academic outcomes. Alternative systems, competing across the board with government-operated schools, seem to have stimulated the latter to be more efficient (as measured by cost) and more effective (as measured by outcomes) than systems in countries where no such competition exists.

Countries without such alternative systems, either because the public systems were acceptable to Catholic leadership (as in Italy, Spain, Austria, and most of Latin America) or because the Catholic share of the population was too small to create and sustain an alternative system competing across the board with public schools, have not experienced the benefits of such competition.



Those who created these alternative systems were concerned with freedom and religious conviction, not international comparisons of academic outcomes. West and Woessmann demonstrate that despite all the warnings by supporters of the common state school, the existence of an extensive sector of alternative schools is of benefit to everyone.

CHARLES L. GLENN
*Boston University School
of Education*

IES under Whitehurst

When Andrew Rudalevige interviewed me for his recent article ("Juggling Act," *features*, Winter 2009), the National Board for Education Sciences, an Institute of Education Sciences (IES) advisory board that I chaired, had not yet completed its congressionally mandated report on the performance of IES. It is now final and available at the institute's web site.

Rudalevige and the board agree that IES has made exceptional progress in improving the rigor and relevance of education research. We also agree that much of the progress is due to the well-crafted authorizing legislation, the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA),

which established the institute and is currently awaiting reauthorization. Because ESRA led to such strong results, the board recommended its reauthorization with few changes. My view is that there is no reason to rush reauthorization, because the act is working well.

The institute's exemplary performance is due in large part to its first and only director, Russ Whitehurst, who completed his term in November 2008. Russ is known for his interest in "what works" with a concomitant emphasis on field experiments, and his greatest legacy may be his attention to infrastructure. He implemented high-quality peer review systems for grants and reports, a continuously improving What Works Clearinghouse, a revamped Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) system, and multidisciplinary pre- and postdoctoral programs that attract and train promising researchers.

Yet much work remains. I advocate an R&D approach based on large-scale, practitioner-generated changes in policy and practice, which are studied using strong designs and methods before being widely implemented. Such studies should be designed to tell us if the changes are effective and provide ideas about why. I also think we need an improved understanding about how practitioners acquire and use research findings.

Despite the successes of ESRA and IES, this enterprise is fragile. President Obama will appoint the next director of IES and nominate members for 9 open seats on the 15-member board. Given Whitehurst's impact, the next director will obviously influence the direction and functioning of IES. The president has a number of pressing issues to tackle immediately—altering how the federal government funds education research isn't one of them.

ROBERT C. GRANGER
*President
William T. Grant Foundation*

Milwaukee Choice Finance

Robert Costrell's analysis of school choice finance in Milwaukee ("Who Gains, Who Loses?" *research*, Winter 2009) fills a gaping void. Throughout the 18-year history of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, misinformation about its fiscal impact has been widespread. Three factors explain this.

First, the subject is complicated. Connecting the dots is a major challenge.

Second, many school choice opponents are indifferent to the facts. They knowingly misstate the program's impact on taxpayers.

Third, the Wisconsin news media has been missing in action. Costrell has done what a host of political and education reporters have failed to do. Their failure has enabled misinformation to proliferate.

Will the news media take advantage of the homework that Costrell has done for them? That remains to be seen.

GEORGE MITCHELL
*Education policy consultant
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Home Schooling

I read Milton Gaither's fine piece on home schooling ("Home Schooling Goes Mainstream," *features*, Winter 2009) as I was preparing for an evening meeting of the board of directors of the South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools (SCAIHS). Gaither's essay reminded me of how much this part of the education landscape has changed since the mid-1980s, when my wife and I began teaching our children at home. Police officers now seldom serve truancy citations to home schoolers (in 1990 in our case). Indeed, home-schooling families now enjoy a high level of public support and admiration as well as generally positive press.

Though these "Anabaptists of American education," as I called parents who have opted for home-based schooling in *The Dissenting Tradition in American*

Education, are certainly an increasingly diverse lot, they are united by a common commitment to the proposition that parents, not the state, have the primary right and responsibility to direct the upbringing and education of their children. They are, in columnist David Brooks's words, "more spiritually, emotionally, and physically invested in their homes than in other spheres of life, having concluded that parenthood is the most enriching and elevating thing they can do."

As Gaither points out, the growth of home-based education has added to the increasing diversity of educational options. The "hybridization" of home schooling has, along with other choice mechanisms and recent Establishment Clause interpretation, blurred the line between government and private educational spheres. As these characteristics were features of education in our colonial period, home-schooling families are reclaiming what was once a primary function of the household.

JAMES C. CARPER
*Department of Educational Studies
University of South Carolina*

Milton Gaither correctly notes that the variety of people practicing home schooling and their pedagogical practices has notably broadened. And he is correct in saying that home schooling is, in many ways, mainstream. He does, however, miss a few key points.

First, he relies too heavily on one 2003 study that collapsed to six the number of most-important reasons parents gave for home schooling. "Most important" hides the multiple and nuanced reasons parents usually give. The overlap between "religion/morality" and "school environment" obfuscates what portion of the reasons is actually world-view-, philosophy-, or religion-based. Furthermore, caution should be taken in relying on one study that generalized from 239 home-schooled students

(and their families) to the 1.1 million or more in the nation in 2003.

Gaither also claims home schooling is no longer a "political movement." Home schooling clearly continues to be a political (and other) movement because its advocates know they must labor to keep fundamental parental rights over the education and upbringing of children recognized and protected from statist academics and government violation. One of their core beliefs, a millennia-old view, is that parents have a basic right not to put their children under education controlled or "approved" by the state. They continually see attacks on their perspective and practice in courts, legislatures, and academic journals.

Finally, Gaither is correct that the increase in tax-funded virtual charter schools blurs lines in the education arena. Home-school advocates, however, do not have "animus toward government" but philosophically and politically oppose government control, based on what the classical liberal theorist Frédéric Bastiat called "legal plunder," over the teaching, training, and indoctrination of children in a "free" nation. They want to see state-run schooling diminish and private education increase. Home schooling is a form of private and independent education. Virtual charter schools are public (government) schools at home (PSAH). PSAH essentially places the government into a family's home and both legally and pedagogically increases state control and influence over children's knowledge, values, and attitudes while diminishing that of the parents.

BRIAN D. RAY
*President
National Home Education
Research Institute*

Alternative Certification

I applaud *Education Next* for its research on ways in which nontraditional programs are recruiting individuals of color

into the teaching field. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has accredited Western Governors University, an institution committed to producing more teachers of color for hard-to-staff schools, especially in rural areas. NCATE has also just completed a study of urban teacher residency (UTR) programs. UTRs succeed in attracting teachers of color to teach in urban areas in shortage fields, which traditional programs have failed to do in large enough numbers. Moreover, unlike some other alternative programs, UTRs retain the teachers they have trained in these hard-to-staff schools. In short, NCATE is interested in accrediting break-the-mold programs of high quality.

However, Peterson and Nadler ("What Happens When States Have Genuine Certification?" *check the facts*, Winter 2009) define "genuine alternative route" as any program requiring under 30 credit hours of coursework; they note, "Of 21 states we consider to have genuine alternate certification, 7 required only that the person pass a test." While NCATE supports high-quality preparation programs, whether they are traditional or alternative routes, it does not support approaches that place unprepared individuals in classrooms on the basis of a test without an accompanying strategy to build these individuals' capacity to teach effectively.

The issue is not alternative certification versus traditional routes. Multiple pathways to becoming a teacher, both within and outside of higher education institutions, should be applauded if they are of high quality. Preparing completers who affect P-12 student learning positively and increasing teacher retention are key criteria by which all programs should be measured and held accountable. All things being equal, cost-effective programs that expand access should be favored, whoever provides them. So far, however, in the absence of

clear definitions and standards for alternative programs in many states and in response to urgent needs for classroom teachers, programs of questionable quality have been permitted to exist.

We face a national challenge in transforming our education system to reflect 21st-century learning skills and global influences. Alternative providers, and entrepreneurial market forces more broadly, can contribute to this transformation in important ways, but no one should equate the scope of their role with the magnitude of the problem we face in transforming America's education system.

JAMES G. CIBULKA
President

National Council for Accreditation
of Teacher Education (NCATE)

Union Watch

Linda Seebach ("Same Old, Same Old," *features*, Winter 2009) asserts that new leadership at both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) signifies no change in these organizations' policies or positions, a situation she finds untenable. The new national presidents have only been in office since July. Let's give them a little time before declaring their administrations moribund.

Ms. Seebach does point out at least one change that AFT president Randi Weingarten is advocating—community schools. While the author ridicules the idea, and it is true, Ms. Weingarten's maiden speech did not provide detail (yes, the devil is often in the details), the idea has considerable saliency among significant segments of the education and policy communities.

The notion of what Ms. Weingarten describes as community schools is not, as Linda Seebach suggests, that schools become the sole providers of all social services. The idea, which was widely

tried in California and elsewhere in the 1980s under the name "school-linked services" or "school-based services," is that students cannot learn when they come to school hungry, or ill, or in pain. Providing ready access to social services, on the school site or nearby, helps to level the academic playing field for these students.

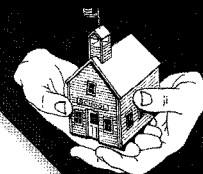
In addition, I can only assume Ms. Seebach's article was written before Randi Weingarten made her November 17 speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. In that speech, the new AFT president stated, "With the exception of vouchers...no issue should be off the table..." Under the category "no issue," Weingarten included teacher assignments, tenure, and differentiated pay. Sounds to me like change may be blowing in the wind after all.

JULIA E. KOPPICH
San Francisco, CA

Technology for Learning

Regarding the article "How Do We Transform Our Schools?" (*features*, Summer 2008), I agree that as organizations continue successful integration of software and web-based solutions into existing teaching methods, the software applications will become more customized; they will have to. The way a student would interact with a web-video player featuring a biology step-by-step video is different from how a student would interact with a web-video featuring a home economics step-by-step video. I remain excited for what lies ahead: TV and Internet media channel convergence is around the corner, and this will significantly assist adoption of video as a learning tool.

LUIS F. CORZO
Founder and VP Marketing
www.doflick.com



Timeout

Schools Win in Court

BY JOSHUA DUNN AND MARTHA DERTHICK

When a lawsuit charges a school with violating the Constitution by using timeouts to control a violent child, judicialization of education has arguably reached a new extreme. Yet federal appellate judges resisted intervention, and instead showed that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), when

followed to the letter, may protect school officials from liability.

A mother in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Jennifer Couture, sued school officials, claiming that their use of a timeout room for her son ("M.C.") violated his Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable seizures and Fourteenth Amendment right to due process. The defendants claimed qualified immunity, which requires courts

to rule in favor of a government employee unless the conduct violates "clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known." A district court found for the plaintiff but was reversed by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in August 2008.

M.C. in 2002 was six years old, profane, and violent. He hit furniture and threatened to kill students and teachers with hot oil. Having judged him "emotionally disturbed," school officials had placed him in a special education program and prepared an Individualized Education Plan in consultation with his mother, who signed it. Teachers were obliged to follow the plan and report to his mother daily. Among the techniques of "behavioral intervention" prescribed were supervised timeouts in a timeout room.

After a visit, Ms. Couture objected to the characteristics of the room: "very small" with "carpeting, but no padding on the walls. Nothing in it.... It had a very dim light." In an administrative appeal to a hearing officer, she also complained of "inappropriate reliance upon timeouts and physical restraints." Defeated there, she complained to the district court under section 1983 of the U.S. Code, which individual litigants often use in an effort to show that state or local officials have deprived them of constitutional or federal statutory rights. The district court was troubled by the length of some of the timeouts and what seemed on occasion to be insufficient provocation on M.C.'s part, such as refusing to take his spelling test.

The circuit court, questioning the district court's mode of analysis, found that the defendants were entitled to qualified immunity. Even if putting M.C. in the timeout room were

For state governments wishing to avoid lawsuits, the lesson may be that laws should be crafted to give parents ample choice.

considered a seizure—a question that the court declined to decide—it was not unreasonable. The court expressed sympathy both for Ms. Couture and the teachers, but ruled that "The Fourth Amendment...does not empower federal courts to displace educational authorities regarding the formulation and enforcement of pedagogical norms.... If we do not allow teachers to rely on a plan specifically approved by

the student's parents and which they are statutorily required to follow, we will put teachers in an impossible position—exposed to litigation no matter what they do."

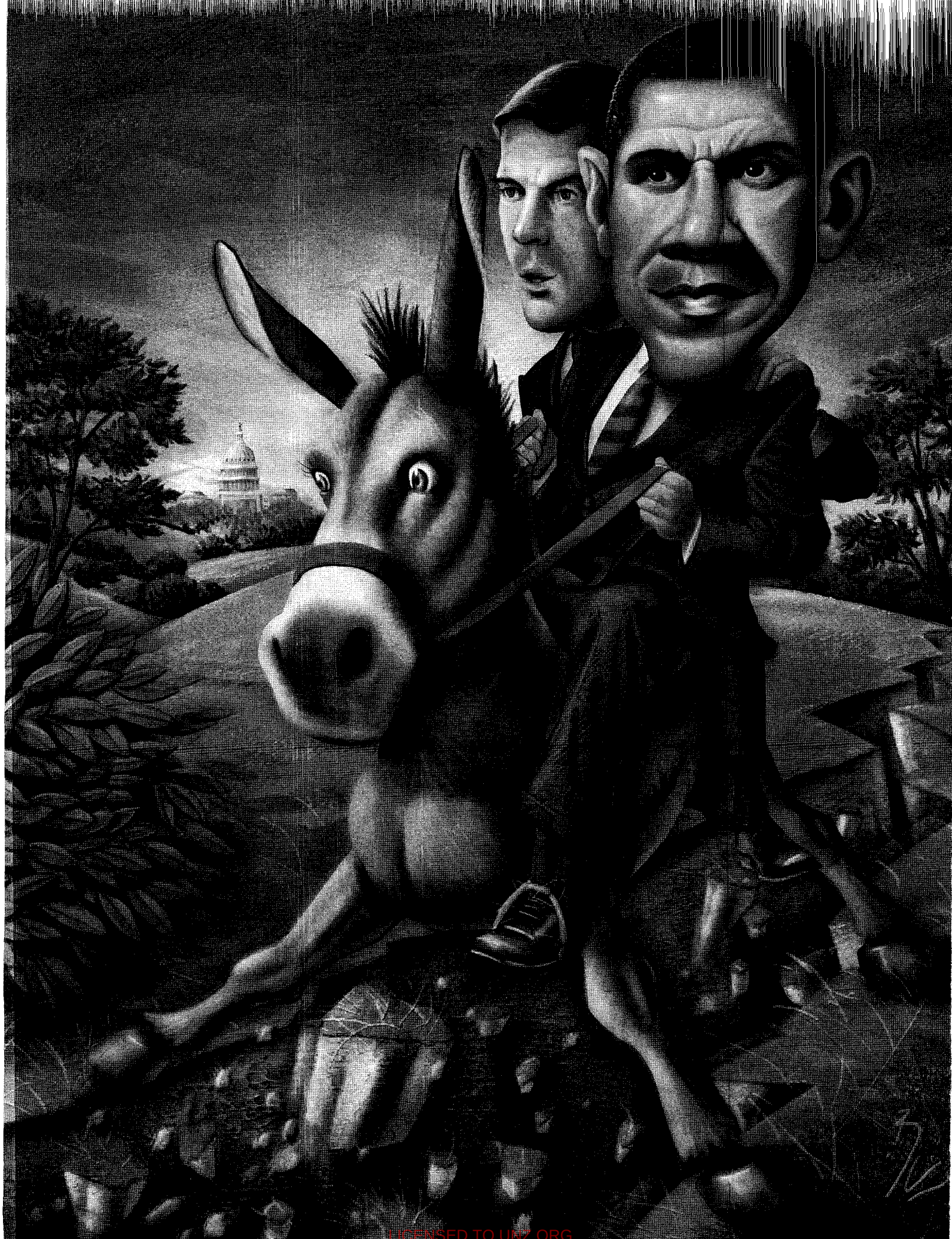
The court acknowledged that M.C.'s behavior did not improve with the timeouts. "But whether the timeouts were a good or effective teaching method is not the relevant question.... This was primarily a pedagogical judgment for the educators on the spot to make."

In response to the Fourteenth Amendment claim, the court said that at some point, removing M.C. from the classroom and putting him in timeout might have gone so far as to deprive him of a protected interest in a public education, but the circuit judges, unlike the district court, concluded that 21 timeouts totaling approximately 12 hours over two and a half months did not go that far. Besides, they said, timeouts were not an interruption of his education, they were part of it.

For schools, the decision signaled that courts would prefer leaving management of troubled students to educational professionals as long as they abide by the law. For state governments wishing to avoid lawsuits, the lesson may be that laws should be crafted to give parents ample choice. For example, Florida law gives all parents with a child in special education the option of finding a private school with support to the same level as the average spent statewide on students with that disability.

Joshua Dunn is assistant professor of political science at the University of Colorado—Colorado Springs.

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Straddling the Democratic Divide

Will reforms follow Obama's spending on education?

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Senate confirmation hearing in January

was thick with encomiums. He was praised by Democrat Tom Harkin of Iowa for the “fresh thinking” he brought to his post as Chicago schools chief for seven years. Republican Lamar Alexander, education secretary under George H. W. Bush, told Duncan he was the best of President Barack Obama's cabinet appointments. Ailing Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy, in written comments entered into the record, praised Duncan for having “championed pragmatic solutions to persistent problems” and for lasting longer in Chicago than most urban superintendents.

The warm greetings given by both Republicans and Democrats on the committee reflect Duncan's reputation as a centrist in the ideologically fraught battles over education reform. He has received national attention for moves favored by reformers, such as opening 75 new schools operated by outside groups and staffed by non-union teachers; introducing a pay-for-performance plan that will eventually be in 40 Chicago schools; and working with organizations, including The New Teacher Project, Teach For America, and New Leaders for New Schools, that recruit talented educators through alternatives to the traditional education-school route.

At the same time, Duncan maintained at least a cordial working relationship with the Chicago Teachers Union, and both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) backed his nomination. He supported the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), but also called for dramatic increases in spending to help schools meet the law's targets, and additional flexibility for districts like his own. In nominating Duncan, Obama said, “We share a deep pragmatism about how to go about this. If pay-for-performance works and we can work with teachers so it doesn't feel like it's being imposed upon them...then that's something that we should explore. If charter schools work, try that.

BY RICHARD LEE COLVIN

ILLUSTRATION / BILL CIGLIANO



In nominating Duncan, Obama said, "We share a deep pragmatism about how to go about this."

You know, let's not be clouded by ideology when it comes to figuring out what helps our kids."

Given the strong union support for the Obama presidency, there was great speculation within education circles throughout the fall as to whether the new president would turn out to be a reformer—willing to challenge existing practices and the teachers unions in order to achieve dramatic changes in schools—or play it politically safe by backing programs that brought only marginal changes. A sharp divide among Democrats was in full view at the party's national convention in Denver, where urban mayors and educators, gathered at a forum sponsored by Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), challenged the dominant role of teachers unions in shaping policy. Newark mayor Cory Booker told those assembled, "We have to understand that as Democrats

we have been wrong on education, and it's time to get it right."

Even before the national convention, conflicts between the unions and Democratic reformers were intensifying. At a New York fundraiser in 2007, Obama reportedly made a similar point. According to Joe Williams, DFER's executive director, Obama incriminated the teachers unions when the director of a Harlem charter school asked the then candidate why Democrats threw up so many obstacles.

Williams explained, "We're at this point where the nation wants to change education more than the unions and the unions are going to have to decide if they're going to be part of the change or be left out of it entirely."

Two manifestoes issued during the Democratic primaries laid out competing philosophies on improving student achievement that were intended to influence the eventual Democratic nominee. A "Broader, Bolder Approach to Education," a letter issued by the liberal Economic Policy Institute, signed by national leaders across much of the political spectrum, and endorsed by the AFT, argued that improving schools alone would not close achievement gaps between disadvantaged and advantaged students. It called on policymakers to provide preschool, afterschool programs, and summer school, and take steps to improve students' health and social development. Another letter, issued by a coalition called the Education Equality Project, advocated addressing school system failures through greater accountability, school choice, and changes in compensation that would promote teacher quality.

Those who signed on to the project, a diverse group of leaders in education, philanthropy, and public service, vowed to "challenge politicians, public officials, educators, union leaders and anybody else who stands in the way of necessary change."

Obama has allies in both camps. Arne Duncan was one of only a handful who signed both statements. Yet in his confirmation hearing, Duncan left little doubt that the administration wants to make systemic changes.

"We must do dramatically better," Duncan told the Senate committee. "We must continue to innovate. We must build

A sharp divide among Democrats was in full view at the party's national convention in Denver, where urban mayors and educators, gathered at a forum sponsored by Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), challenged the dominant role of teachers unions in shaping policy.

upon what works. We must stop doing what doesn't work. And we have to continue to challenge the status quo."

Advisors to Obama say the rhetorical distinction was overdrawn and that the thrust of the president's strategy is to make progress without causing further polarization. His education platform reflected that approach. Like many Democrats, he wants to spend more money: on helping students attend college; early childhood care and education; and improving teaching through mentoring and professional development for both principals and teachers. He has criticized NCLB for encouraging teaching solely focused on preparing students to pass tests. But in line with many Republicans and more conservative Democrats, Obama, like Duncan, supports school choice, charter schools, performance-based pay, and alternatives to education schools for teacher preparation (see sidebar). He and his opponent, Senator John McCain, both praised the work of Washington, D.C., schools chancellor Michelle Rhee, who has fought the local union as well as the AFT over tenure and teacher pay.

Economic Stimulus

Widespread agreement that only a massive stimulus package could rescue the U.S. economy presented the new administration with the opportunity to placate both sides of the Democratic divide. The unions and their allies would get a massive infusion of federal funds into the schools that would help offset state and local budget cuts. And this would give Obama cover to push for tougher reforms down the road.

House Democrats, after negotiations with Obama's team, in mid-January proposed a stimulus package of \$825 billion that included between \$120 billion and \$140 billion for public schools and colleges. Most of the money would have few strings attached.

The spending package would boost federal spending on Title I programs for low-income students and for special education, distributing the money according to current formulas. It would also provide at least \$39 billion to offset state cuts in education budgets and \$20 billion for capital improvements at schools and colleges. About \$15 billion would be available to states as bonuses for efforts such as ensuring that low-performing schools and districts have effective teachers and that the performance of English-language learners and special education students is properly assessed (see Figure 1). One Obama aide said similar incentives would be incorporated into education programs to be introduced later in the spring.

The stimulus package also proposed to boost funding for the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), a Bush-era program that provides financial incentives to teachers and principals who raise overall student achievement and close achievement gaps. After Democrats took control of Congress in 2006, they zeroed out funding for TIF but restored \$100 million for the following year.

Clues from the Campaign

Throughout his campaign for the presidency, Barack Obama expressed support for higher teacher pay in exchange for greater accountability for teacher performance.

August 19, 2007, Democratic primary debate on *This Week*

"Every teacher I think wants to succeed. And if we give them a pathway to professional development, where we're creating master teachers, they are helping with apprenticeships for young new teachers, they are involved in a variety of other activities that are really adding value to the schools, then we should be able to give them more money for it. But we should only do it if the teachers themselves have some buy-in in terms of how they're measured. They can't be judged simply on standardized tests that don't take into account whether children are prepared before they get to school or not."

April 27, 2008, Fox News interview:

As president, can you name a hot-button issue where you would be willing to buck the Democratic Party line and say, You know what? Republicans have a better idea here?

"I think that on issues of education, I've been very clear about the fact—and sometimes I've gotten in trouble with the teachers union on this—that we should be experimenting with charter schools. We should be experimenting with different ways of compensating teachers."

August 27, 2008, Democratic National Convention:

"Michelle and I are here only because we were given a chance at an education. I will not settle for an America where some kids don't have that chance. I'll invest in early childhood education. I'll recruit an army of new teachers, pay them higher salaries and give them more support. In exchange, I'll ask for higher standards and more accountability."

SOURCE: Ontheissues.org

In his last budget, Bush requested \$200 million for the program, the same amount Obama's team has proposed.

Thirty-six states plus the District of Columbia already have local or statewide teacher compensation systems that add some sort of financial incentive to the standard step-and-column pay plan, according to the NEA. Former NEA president Reg Weaver cautioned that "while we can be open to alternatives, we should always oppose politically motivated, quick fixes designed to

weaken the voice of teachers and the effectiveness of education employees. If they want to talk about changing the way we're paid, they need to do that with us, not to us."

In Obama's platform, he agreed that such plans should be developed in consultation with teachers. Among the promising models is a voluntary pay-for-performance program in place in districts in a dozen states, funded in part by TIF, and implemented by Duncan in Chicago. The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) provides teachers with professional support, helps them to use data in instruction, holds them accountable for results, and provides bonuses. Teachers in 10 Chicago schools voted to participate in TAP starting in the fall of 2007, and bonuses totaling \$340,000 were given out the following year for improved test scores at 9 of the schools. "This is a landmark event for Chicago's schools—recognizing and rewarding educators for exemplary work and compensating them accordingly," Duncan said at the time.



Following his confirmation, Arne Duncan speaks with Tom Harkin, Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee on Capitol Hill, as Obama presidential inaugural committee chairman, John Rogers, looks on.

The scale of the proposed spending on education is stunning, more than doubling the federal contribution. Of course, even an increase of that magnitude would leave the feds as the junior investors in public education, their contribution dwarfed by current state and local spending. But the funds proposed to offset cuts in state funding would mean that, for the first time, the federal government would be directly covering the cost of basic school operations. That kind of money could buy a lot of goodwill, especially if it helps states avoid

laying off thousands of teachers. By December 2008, 19 states had cut K–12 education spending, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal research group. Even with the infusion of federal support proposed so far, states may have to make further cuts in their education budgets if the economy does not improve quickly. States spend between one-third and one-half of their budgets on elementary and secondary education, and the revenue available to state and local governments

Extra Help for Schools (Figure 1)

The \$825 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act proposed by House Democrats in January would provide at least \$80 billion and possibly as much as \$120 billion in new funding to Department of Education programs for elementary and secondary school students.

Program or Purpose	Billions of Dollars
State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, to provide fiscal relief to the states over two years	79.0
For local school districts and public colleges and universities distributed through existing state and federal formulas	39.0
Bonus grants to states for meeting key education performance measures	15.0
For other high-priority needs such as public safety, may include education	25.0
School modernization, to be distributed according to states' 2008 Title I allocations	14.0
Title I School Improvement Grants to states and high-need school districts	13.0
State grants for special education	13.0
Enhancing Education through Technology	1.0
Infants and Families program, to make early intervention services available for young children with disabilities	0.6
For enhancement of states' longitudinal data systems	0.25
Teacher Incentive Fund (supports performance-based pay)	0.2
School modernization efforts at Impact Aid schools	0.1
Education for Homeless Children and Youth	0.066
Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities	0.025

SOURCE: U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations web site

is shrinking fast. By January 2008, states had reported deficits of \$350 billion. "If the economy doesn't get better, schools are in trouble," said Jack Jennings, founder and CEO of the Center on Education Policy. "For the sake of the schools it's important that Obama pay attention to the economy."

Even if the economy recovers and the stimulus package goes through intact, some observers question whether the proposed spending will do enough to address persistent disparities in achievement. Despite past federal support directed toward the needs of low-income students, African American 4th and 8th graders did not make measurable progress on the National Assessment of Educational Progress between 2005 and 2007. "Is the stimulus going to benefit kids in ways that are palpable and real and that improve achievement?" asked Dianne Piche of the Citizens Commission on Civil Rights. As the House was passing its version of the stimulus package (see Figure 1), Frederick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute noted that most of the money simply gave states dollars to keep intact the programs of the past: "It's like an alcoholic at the end of the night when the bars close and the solution is to open the bar for another hour," he told a *New York Times* reporter.

No Child Left Behind

The pressing economic issues, as well as difficult politics, will likely push reauthorization of NCLB into 2010 or even 2011. California Democrat Representative George Miller, who was one of four members of Congress who worked with the first Bush administration on the original NCLB, wants to see it revised and reauthorized. Yet Miller acknowledged to the *Washington Post* that "at the end of the day, it may be the most tainted brand in America."

NCLB has been a great success in the sense that no one disagrees with its goals: accountability for results, addressing issues of teacher quality, putting a spotlight on the learning of all students, and better targeting of funds to districts serving the most disadvantaged students. Still, its detractors argue that the law has had unfortunate side effects: too much time spent teaching to narrow tests, schools focused on boosting the scores of students who are just below the proficiency threshold, and some states lowering their standards to reduce the number of schools missing their achievement targets.

"We've learned over the past five to 10 years that we have to align curriculum, align standards, and align tests with



Obama told the crowd of 2 million people at his inauguration, "Our schools fail too many.... We will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do."

Perhaps the best hope for those who support the law's strict accountability provisions is that the goodwill built up through the stimulus plan could convince education groups to support any NCLB proposal made by Obama

professional development," Jennings said. "We've also learned that it is very, very hard to do. We've also learned that if we really set certain goals... teachers will pay attention to those students who are just below the goal and not pay attention to those who are further down or further up."

Obama spoke during his campaign at length about the ins and outs of testing and decried teaching to the test. Rather than abandon the testing in NCLB, he has said he wants to invest in improving assessments, so that they measure a broader range of skills than just the basics.

The battle fought over reauthorization of NCLB in 2007 offers a preview of the challenges the Obama team will face. In a speech at the National Press Club outlining his priorities for reauthorizing the law, Representative Miller said, "Throughout our schools and communities, the American people have a very strong sense that the No Child Left Behind Act is not fair, not flexible, and is not funded. And they are not wrong."



President Obama, Vice President Biden, and newly nominated Secretary of Education Duncan, speak to elementary school children at Dodge Renaissance Academy, a teacher training site in Chicago, IL.

The 2007 reauthorization effort nearly succeeded. But it blew up because the negotiators could not reach agreement on how schools should be measured. The NEA, in particular, wanted to place more weight on such inputs as school atmosphere and other qualitative measures and less on test scores. “That was a nonstarter for lots of people,” says Piche, who testified before Congress during the reauthorization hearings.

“We were very, very close on actual language...even on multiple measures, and how you would improve assessments, but ultimately there were sticking points that haven’t gone away,” Piche said. “I think [the NEA] hoped that with a Democratic

majority in the House there would be a significant loosening of the Adequate Yearly Progress provisions [which identify schools as failing if they aren’t on pace to full proficiency by 2014] and changes in assessments.”

The Obama administration is expected to be willing to add a few criteria for judging schools beyond test scores. But the use of test scores, disaggregated to show student achievement by ethnicity and socioeconomic status, is certain to remain.

Reauthorizing the law in 2010 may be even more difficult than in 2007. Many freshman Democrats in the House who were elected in 2008, as well as many who came to Washington in 2006, pledged to repeal NCLB. Few of the Republicans left in Congress are moderates, meaning those who remain would like to reduce the role of the federal government in public education. Depending on what happens with the law over the next two years, more opponents of NCLB could be elected to Congress in 2010. By then, so many schools may be considered in need of improvement—even with the lax standards set by many states—that the law may appear irrational and unworkable. Perhaps the best hope for those who support the law’s strict accountability provisions is that the goodwill built up through the stimulus plan could convince education groups to support any NCLB proposal made by Obama, even if it looks a lot like the one that went down in flames in 2007.

In the interim, the law could be weakened or strengthened through the regulatory process. Piche says the administration should invest in better assessments, especially for English-language learners and students receiving special education services.

President Obama has proposed to help states develop more rigorous standards.

“Democrats,” he said in a speech last September 2007 in Dayton, Ohio, “have to realize that...being against No Child Left Behind is not an education policy.”

Hope for Reform

Despite the challenges, many in Washington are hopeful that public schools may in fact improve under an Obama administration. Although he cannot ignore the unions that form a key part of the party’s constituency, Obama owes less to them than did past Democratic presidents. The unions did not support him in the primaries and, because he raised so much money on his

own, Obama was not as dependent on their money as others have been. Of course, he is hugely popular with teachers, and the staggering amount of money he appears to be willing to spend on education will only make him more so.

In addition, the leaders of the two unions at least appear more willing to be flexible on some long-standing issues. AFT president Randi Weingarten has said several times that “nothing is off the table” except vouchers. Not that much is known about Dennis Van Roekel, the Arizona math teacher who became president of the NEA last summer (see “Same Old, Same Old,” *features*, Winter 2009). But he was among those who supported Bob

Chase, an earlier NEA president, when he tried to get the union to endorse what he called the “new unionism.” Chase wanted the union to experiment with new forms of performance pay and peer review of teacher performance, but the rank-and-file members nationally were reluctant to go along. It remains unclear how far Weingarten and Van Roekel will be able to push their members now to accept changes in compensation, evaluation, tenure, and so on.

Weingarten finds it “very sad” and frustrating that unions are always blamed for opposing reforms. “There’s a lot of demonizing and blame-mongering going on in education and it’s ridiculous...because it just creates excuses,” she said. “It says to me that they don’t think anything can be done because they are looking for the fall guy rather than helping all kids achieve.”

Weingarten expressed hope that Obama would push for more rigorous standards, better curricula, more valid assessments, and investments in helping teachers improve. “You can’t buy it by putting money out there and saying to teachers, ‘if you don’t do it, you’re fired,’” she said, referring to her opposition to Michelle Rhee in Washington, D.C. “We have the responsibility...to recruit and support and retain teachers if they’re doing a good job, and if not, to counsel them out of the profession.”

But Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, counters that the unions have resisted that course of action. “I think the unions are up against the wall,” she said. “The whole movement toward the notion that teachers don’t have a basic right to be in the classroom unless they are effective is proving so powerful as an idea that they’re weakened because they’ve run away from it rather than embrace it.”

It is well known that one of the strongest threads in the narrative of Obama’s journey from his childhood to the White House is educational opportunity (see “The Early Education of Our Next President,” *features*, Fall 2008). Schooled first in Indonesia, he returned to Hawaii because his mother wanted

him to get a better education. There, his maternal grandmother and grandfather enrolled him in the private Punahou School, where he studied with the island’s elite. Then, it was on to Occidental College, Columbia University, and Harvard Law School.

“I wasn’t born with a lot of advantages, but I was given love and support, and an education that put me on a pathway to success,” Obama said during a major campaign speech on education last September in Dayton, Ohio. “The reason Michelle and I are where we are today is because this country we love gave us the chance at an education. And the reason that I’m running for

president is to give every single American that same chance.”

Joe Williams believes that all of those factors, as well as Obama’s personal commitment to improving education, create a real opportunity to bring about systemic, long-lasting changes. “Everyone says they support the goals of NCLB and if that’s real, then he can use his bully pulpit to say that we’ll do in education the equivalent of saying we’ll put a man on the moon in 10 years.

“He can say that we will make sure that every kid who starts the race will cross the finish line and it will give everyone goose bumps and start a new type of discussion about what the game is. But it only has the potential to change the game if he treats it as an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and inspire people to think very big about what is possible,” adds Williams. “Obama is the only person I’ve seen in the last 20 years who may be up to that job.”

“His vision of education is as a foundation not just of the economy but of a society in which people take care of each other,” explained Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond, who advised Obama during the campaign and handled education policy for the president-elect’s transition team, in remarks delivered in November 2007 at a National Academy of Education event. “I think we can make great strides in a very short time.”

Although some may worry about the cost of all of the new programs, Darling-Hammond views the amount Obama wants to spend on education as a relatively small part of the overall bailout and recovery package, which could exceed \$1.5 trillion.

In his speech last September in Dayton, Obama assured his audience, “We can do it all.”

Richard Lee Colvin is a longtime education journalist and director of the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, Teachers College, Columbia University.

The unions did not support him in the primaries and, because he raised so much money on his own, Obama was not as dependent on their money as others have been.



Accountability Overboard

*Massachusetts poised
to toss out the nation's
most successful reforms*

BY CHARLES D. CHIEPPO and JAMES T. GASS

President Barack Obama and Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick are both brilliant orators who espouse the “politics of hope.” Both know about hope firsthand, having overcome less-than-privileged backgrounds to achieve great success. Patrick endorsed Obama early in the campaign and is a close advisor. That closeness got Obama in trouble during the primaries, when he was caught cribbing lines from some of Patrick’s speeches. More recently, Patrick chaired the platform committee for the Democratic National Convention that nominated Obama.

But we can only hope their similarities don’t extend to education policy. Patrick calls education his “singular pursuit.” Yet after winning election in a 2006 landslide fueled by strong support from the Bay State’s powerful teachers unions—including \$3 million in contributions—he has pursued the systematic dismantling of reforms that have made Massachusetts the national leader in public education.

The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 dramatically increased school funding in return for high academic standards, accountability, and enhanced school choice. In the years following, the Commonwealth’s independent board of education, founded in 1837 with Horace Mann at the helm, implemented a set of reforms that have unquestionably been the nation’s most successful.

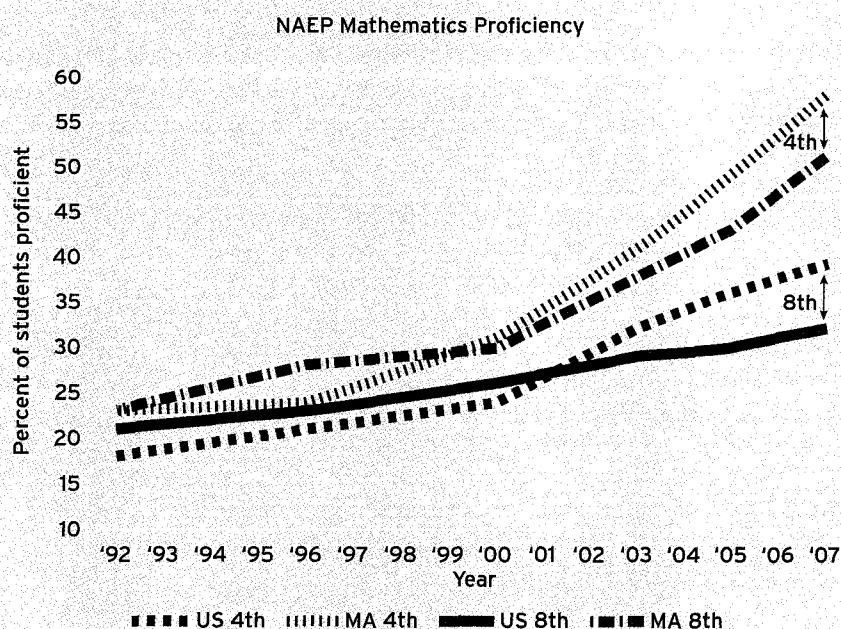
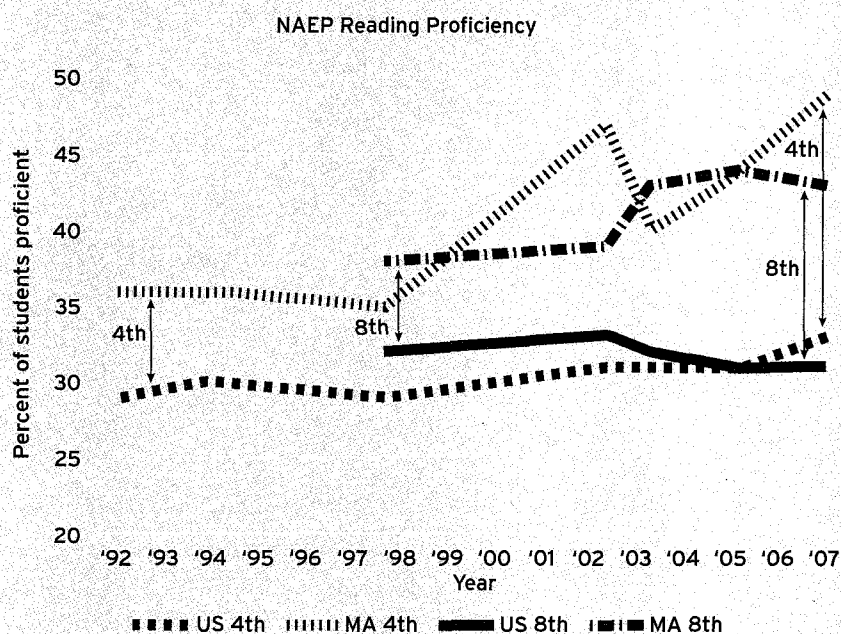
In 2005, Massachusetts became the first state ever to finish first in four categories of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): 4th-grade



ILLUSTRATION / GETTY IMAGES

Great Strides (Figure 1)

Since passage of the Education Reform Act of 1993, gains in proficiency in both reading and math among 4th and 8th graders in Massachusetts have outpaced gains among their peers nationally, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

reading and math and 8th-grade reading and math. The next time the test was administered, Bay State students did it again. Late last year, results from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) demonstrated that Massachusetts students are not only the best in the country, they are globally competitive as well. The Commonwealth's 8th graders tied for first in the world in science and were sixth in math; 4th graders scored second in science and third in math.

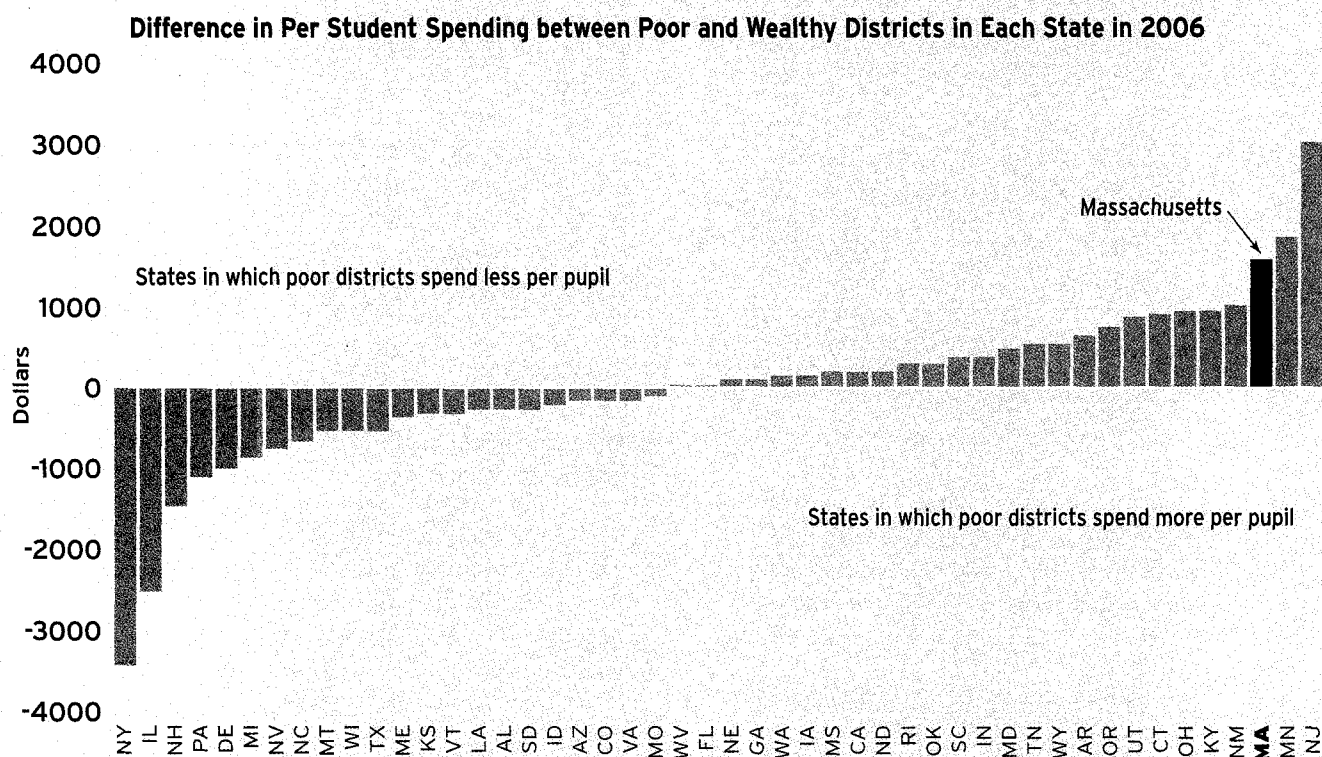
Despite the clear success of more than a decade of education reform in Massachusetts, Governor Patrick's administration has turned its back on the very forces behind that success: it is wavering on standards, choice is under continual fire, and the board of education has been stripped of the independence that for 170 years was Horace Mann's legacy and had allowed the board to implement reform with a singular focus on improving student achievement.

In June 2008, Governor Patrick released the recommendations of his "Readiness Project," an unwieldy 168-member, 13-subcommittee behemoth charged with developing a long-term "action agenda" for education. The plan calls for full-day kindergarten, universal pre-K, consolidation of school districts, and differentiated pay for teachers—all worthy goals. But the report maintains Patrick's steadfast resistance to raising caps on charter schools. (Charter schools have the same effect on some of his supporters in the education establishment as Nancy Pelosi has on Rush Limbaugh.) Although the governor claimed during his campaign that he would open more charter schools once he "fixed" the formula by which they are funded, the Readiness Project is virtually silent on charters and their funding.

The *Boston Globe*, which enthusiastically endorsed the governor in both the Democratic primary and the general election, was not impressed. An editorial titled "Adrift in the edu-sphere" noted, "It's nice to explore the educational cosmos.

Favorable Funding (Figure 2)

States vary widely in how much they spend in poor districts relative to wealthy districts; Massachusetts is one of the few states that spend a thousand dollars more per student in the poorest districts than in the wealthy ones.



Notes: Wealthy districts are those that have the lowest poverty rates and comprise 25 percent of the state's enrollment; similarly, poor districts are those that have the highest poverty rates and comprise 25 percent of the state's total enrollment. Funding is from state and local sources only. Figures are adjusted for regional cost differences and special education students are weighted. Hawaii has only one district and is excluded, as is Alaska.

SOURCE: The Education Trust, 2007

But taxpayers can't be expected to pay for such a trip...when the likely cost of implementing Patrick's full-blown plans could exceed \$2 billion per year."

Yet another commission, this one tasked with determining how to pay for Patrick's action agenda, was appointed in June 2008. By the time its report was released, in the midst of a snowstorm on New Year's Eve, the bottom had fallen out of the economy. Instead of identifying revenues to support new programs, the report focused mostly on cost-saving measures designed to preserve the current level of quality, although a majority of the commission's 23 members did endorse raising the Commonwealth's income tax from 5 to 6 percent.

Success Story

All of this is particularly bizarre in light of the dramatic strides

the state has made in improving its schools. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce published a state-by-state report card on educational effectiveness in 2007 that rated the Commonwealth's public schools number one in the nation. The combination of funding, standards, accountability, and choice has brought real, measurable gains in student achievement (see Figure 1). A look at the condition of public education prior to reform shows just how far Massachusetts has come. During the 1980s, the Commonwealth's verbal SAT scores were below the national average; math scores were below average as late as 1992. A funding system that was overly reliant on local property tax revenue created vast discrepancies from district to district in student achievement, class size, and the availability of resources like textbooks, libraries, and technology.

Since 1993 the Commonwealth has pumped more than \$40 billion in new state money into public education,

If It Ain't Broke, Break It



On February 2, 2007, a group of urban school superintendents attended a State House meeting sponsored by a local education group. It was the kind of event at which everybody smiles and talks about the lofty goals they all share, rather than the multitude of issues they're fighting about behind the scenes.

Immediately following the meeting, the urban superintendents met with Dana Mohler-Faria, education advisor to the newly elected governor Deval Patrick. They brought with them a memorandum that contained policy proposals that stood in stark contrast to the harmonious rhetoric heard just minutes before:

- Restructure the state board of education
- Eliminate the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and district accountability
- Conduct an independent charter-school study (even though the state department of education had completed a comprehensive study of charter schools just months before)
- Reduce the transfer of district funds to charter schools and remove charters from the state education aid formula, thereby subjecting them to the annual appropriation process.

The memorandum would foretell much of the Patrick administration's education policy over the next 18 months.

matched by \$40 billion-plus in new local funding. Each district's foundation budget, the minimum expenditure needed to provide an adequate education, is determined by formula, along with the amount each city and town can afford to contribute. The Commonwealth fills in the gap between the local contribution and the foundation budget. The result is a funding formula in which the vast majority of state education aid goes to the poorer school districts, making Massachusetts one of the national leaders in this respect as well (see Figure 2).

To ensure high academic standards and school-level accountability, state curriculum frameworks provide a subject-by-subject outline of the material that should form the basis of local curricula. To ensure implementation of the frameworks, students are tested each spring. Since 2003, passing the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests (based on the liberal arts-rich content of the frameworks) has been a high school graduation requirement. High-stakes testing also extends to new teachers, who must pass tests that measure communication and literacy skills as well as subject-area knowledge.

The state's NAEP scores shot up after the curriculum frameworks were completed and the MCAS test was first administered in 1998. By 2007, the average Massachusetts 4th grader was performing at a higher level in math than the average 6th grader had been in 1996. Achieve, Inc., a national education organization established by governors and business leaders, found in 2001 that Massachusetts was the only state among the 10 it examined that had both strong standards and strong assessments. A 2007 study by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education confirmed the tests' validity, finding a strong correlation between MCAS results and college performance.

Noted educator and developer of the Core Knowledge curriculum E. D. Hirsch lauded the Massachusetts approach in a February 2008 op-ed in the *Washington Post*. "Consider the eighth grade NAEP results from Massachusetts, which are a stunning exception to the nationwide pattern of stagnation and decline," he wrote. "That is because Massachusetts decided...students (and teachers) should learn explicit, substantive things about history, science and literature, and that students should be tested on such knowledge."

One might expect the governor would support schools that the state's own analysis has found to be successful.

Choice and Charters

In Massachusetts, public charter schools are the principal vehicle for offering educational choice, and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation has described the Commonwealth's charter-school approval process as the nation's most rigorous. Today, roughly 25,000 students (about 2.6 percent of the total public school population) attend Massachusetts charter schools, and another 21,000 are on wait-lists. Admission to an oversubscribed school is by lottery. When a student chooses to transfer to a charter school, funding follows from the district to the charter school. Despite the fact that districts are reimbursed for three years after a student leaves (100 percent the first year, 60 percent the second, and 40 percent in the third) and despite the 2004 adoption of district-friendly changes to the charter-funding formula, the flow of money has made charter schools controversial.

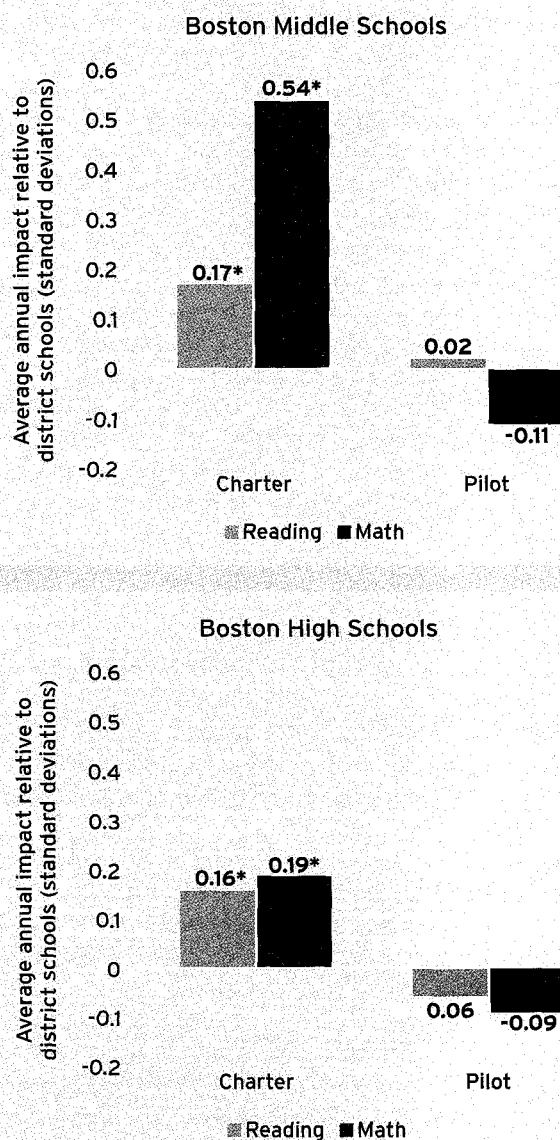
That controversy has fueled a one-step-forward, two-steps-back treatment of charters over the years. Caps on the number of schools have been raised just twice and now stand at 72 for the original type (known as Commonwealth charter schools) and at 48 for Horace Mann charters (a unionized, in-district model sanctioned after Commonwealth charters were established). Other limitations have been placed on both types of charter schools. The statewide share of public school students who can attend charters is capped at 4 percent. In any year in which a new charter school is approved, at least three of the newly approved charters must be located in low-performing districts. The law limits to 9 percent the portion of district spending that can be transferred to charter schools. More than 150 communities, mostly in poorer areas with low-performing schools, are bumping up against that cap, which places a de facto moratorium on charters.

Charter school results have been strong. A 2006 Massachusetts Department of Education study found that 90 percent of charter schools performed as well as or better than the districts from which their students came and 30 percent outperformed sending districts by a substantial margin. Their success has been particularly striking in urban areas, where most charters are located. Several urban charter schools, like Community Day in Lawrence, and MATCH, Boston Prep, and Excel Academy in Boston, serve overwhelmingly low-income and minority populations, yet outscore even the best suburban schools on MCAS tests.

SABIS International Charter School in Springfield is among the schools that have had remarkable success in narrowing achievement gaps based on race and economic status, a clear priority for the next phase of education reform. By 10th grade, Hispanic and African American students, who together make up 60 percent of the school's student body, outperform white students statewide on the MCAS English exam and are virtually even with statewide averages for white students in math. More than 2,500 students sit on

Gold-Standard Research Shows Charters Excel (Figure 3)

In Boston, charter schools outperform district schools across the board. Meanwhile, students in pilot schools (the model for Governor Patrick's proposed readiness schools) perform no better than comparable students in district schools.



the school's waiting list. Every member of all seven graduating classes has been accepted to college.

A study conducted by a team of Harvard and MIT researchers and published in January by the Boston Foundation showed that Boston charter schools dramatically outperform both district and pilot schools (semi-autonomous district schools created in response to charters). It found that the academic impact from a year spent in a Boston charter is comparable to that of a year spent in one of the city's elite exam schools and, in middle school math, equivalent to one-half of the achievement gap between black and white students (see Figure 3).

One might expect the governor would support schools that the state's own analysis and others have found to be successful. Indeed, prior to release of the Readiness Project recommendations, Governor Patrick said, "Everything is on the table because our future is at stake." Everything, it seems, except expanding the kind of educational choice that transformed the governor's own life.

Patrick earned a scholarship from A Better Chance, an organization that provides educational opportunities to young people of color. The scholarship transported him from the South Side of Chicago to Milton Academy, an elite Massachusetts preparatory school, and put him on a trajectory that led to Harvard, a top position in the U.S. Department of Justice, the corporate world, and ultimately the governor's office.

But the Readiness Project includes precious little that would give others the opportunity to choose their school. The Readiness Project proposes "readiness schools," which would have some of the autonomy of charter schools and some of the features of pilot schools. Teachers in a district school could come together and vote to convert to a readiness school, or districts could initiate the conversion. As an inducement to adopt the newly proposed schools, S. Paul Reville, whom Patrick appointed first to chair the state board of education and then as secretary of education, floated the possibility of a freeze on charter schools in districts that embrace readiness schools. When the trial balloon became public, he quickly backpedaled in the face of a torrent of opposition.

The administration's current position on the charter freeze is unclear. When questioned, Patrick said the charter school debate had reached "stalemate" and his plan includes new ways to achieve the same goals.

Dismantling Success

In 2000, the Commonwealth created the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) as an independent state

agency to measure the effectiveness of school-district managers at implementing reform. Beginning in 2002, EQA conducted comprehensive audits of more than 175 school districts. The audits scrutinized MCAS performance, district leadership, curriculum and instruction, teacher and student assessment and evaluation, and business and financial operations. All findings were made public.

Soon after taking office, Patrick moved to eliminate the EQA. Opponents particularly disliked the agency because it did its job so well—auditing school districts and reporting when they came up short. Two studies by Boston-based think tank Pioneer Institute analyzed agency data and found that low-performing urban districts in particular were not aligning curricula with state frameworks and not using MCAS data effectively to improve achievement by tailoring lessons to student weaknesses.

More than a year after the EQA was scuttled, the co-chairs of the state legislature's Joint Committee on Education filed a bill, later enacted, creating a new Advisory Council on District Accountability and Assistance. The

new agency amounts to the fox guarding the

accountability henhouse, replacing the EQA's independent 5-person board with a 13-member panel that includes representatives of the very people it's supposed to audit: the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents; American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts; Massachusetts Teachers Association; Massachusetts Association of School Committees; Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association; and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association.

The administration's proposal to overhaul the Commonwealth's education governance structure gained legislative approval in February 2008. An education commissioner who reported to the board of education, not the governor, had long directed primary and secondary public education in Massachusetts. The Patrick proposal resurrected the state secretary of education post, which had been created and abolished twice since the 1970s.

Reville, who then chaired the board of education, claimed Governor Patrick's plan kept appropriate distance between politics and education policy. But when a far weaker education secretariat had been proposed in 2003, Reville testified before the legislature in opposition to the plan, saying, "No matter how well constituted, an education secretariat creates a competing center of power that vies with and against the state's chief school officer, the Commissioner of Education and the state education agency."

The new agency amounts to the fox guarding the accountability henhouse, including representatives of the very people it's supposed to audit

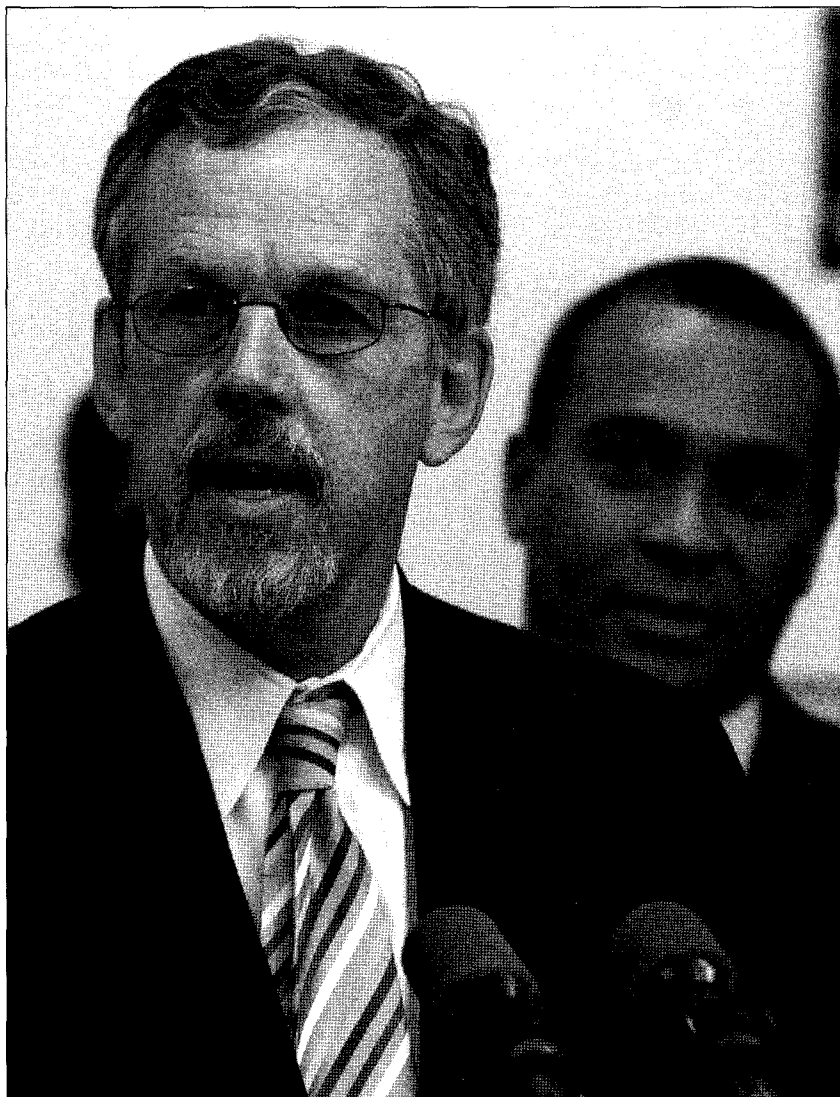
Governor Patrick himself contradicted Reville's claim that the new proposal was more respectful of independent education policy-making. At its unveiling, the governor said his plan "will be different in that (the secretary) will have real authority."

But the administration's main target was the state board of education. In a move reminiscent of FDR's court-packing plan, the overhaul added two seats to the board, opened up two more slots by removing the commissioner of early childhood education and the chancellor of higher education, made the new secretary a voting member, and truncated the terms of members least likely to agree with the administration.

Even more importantly, it stripped the renamed Board of Elementary and Secondary Education of its independence, placing it firmly under the governor's control by giving the new secretary final say over budget requests and veto power over its selection of future commissioners of education. The board had just selected Mitchell Chester, an Ohio education official, to be the next commissioner. Chester beat out Karla Baehr, who was superintendent of schools in the city of Lowell, had gained some prominence among urban superintendents (see sidebar, page 22), and was widely seen as the choice of the education establishment and the governor. Baehr was later hired as a deputy commissioner.

The usually affable Patrick also used the unveiling of his governance proposal to send a message to those concerned about charter schools, saying they should "grow up." Later, after release of the Boston Foundation study, Patrick called the debate about raising charter caps "a red herring because we're not at the cap," despite the fact that Boston is among the urban communities bumping up against the 9 percent of school district spending limitation, with only 111 charter seats remaining and 1,720 students languishing on wait lists.

In February 2008, the board, still chaired by Reville (he assumed the new secretary of education post on July 1), became the first to reject a charter school recommended for approval by the commissioner of education. The focus of the board's discussion about the proposed SABIS regional charter school in the city of Brockton was a 2005 state department of education (DOE) report that identified problems at the Springfield SABIS charter school. Days after the new school's application was rejected, a 2006 DOE letter surfaced that said the Springfield school had successfully addressed all the



Governor Deval Patrick introduces Paul Reville, his choice for Massachusetts Secretary of Education.

major issues raised in the earlier report. Company officials who attended the board meeting were not allowed to respond to Reville's criticisms.

A *Boston Globe* editorial noted that the "rejection raises thorny questions about just how hard the Patrick administration is willing to push to achieve equity in education." Like SABIS's successful Springfield charter school, the proposed school would have served troubled communities. The most current data available prior to the proposed school's rejection showed that 20 of Brockton's 23 schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under federal law, and all 6 failed to make AYP in nearby Randolph, where the schools are in such bad shape the district was required to submit a plan to stave off state receivership. During the board's debate over the proposed charter school, Patrick appointee and board PTA representative Ruth Kaplan commented that

charter schools are too focused on sending students to college, saying “families...don’t always know what’s best for their children.”

During the spring of 2008, Reville charged a “21st Century Skills Task Force” with rewriting curricula and ensuring that Massachusetts students are prepared to succeed in a fast-changing economy. The task force’s report, published in November, proposes revamping MCAS and using the U.S. History test to try out project-based assessments that require students to demonstrate skills like “global awareness,” a change likely to crowd out topics like the Constitution or causes of the Civil War. It calls on the teachers unions, school committees, and superintendents that have fought education reform for 15 years to determine how to integrate 21st-century skills in our schools.

In a sad irony, the task force report claims that “Massachusetts can learn from the experience of West Virginia” on ways to incorporate the needed skills. West Virginia students score below the national average on the NAEP tests, and the state was among the seven that saw the largest declines in reading scores between 1998 and 2005.

A month after release of the task force report, former state senate president Thomas Birmingham, one of the architects of education reform, delivered an address in which said he was “discomforted” by the direction of the Readiness Project and that the 21st Century Skills Task Force “may threaten to...drive us back in the direction of vague expectations and fuzzy standards.”

Teacher testing has also come under fire. In April 2008, the state senate voted to allow some teachers to be licensed even if they failed the required exam three times. The administration announced that it was looking at alternative criteria for aspiring teachers, even though most of the tests are at a high-school level of difficulty. Reville told the *Globe* the test “isn’t necessarily the best venue for everyone to demonstrate their competency.”

The move to back away from teacher testing sparked another firestorm of opposition. In a *Boston Globe* op-ed, Charles Glenn, then dean ad interim of Boston University’s School of Education, wrote, “It would be a gross disservice for our public school children to be taught by teachers who do not meet the standards set by our current teacher tests.” Reville later said the administration didn’t support the senate vote after all.

With the pillars of reform under attack, Joe Williams, executive director of Democrats for Education Reform, wrote in the *Globe*, “You have to wonder why Massachusetts seems intent on retreating from its own nationally recognized success. The backward slide is already evident.”

The Wrong Path

The Commonwealth’s 15-year track record of successful education reform gave Governor Patrick a clear path ahead on education policy. Instead of undoing the reforms of his predecessors, the governor could have built on the state’s success by carrying on the commitment to high standards, fine-tuning a successful accountability system, and maintaining the

governance structure that had successfully insulated critical education policy decisions from special-interest pressure. He could extend to others the educational opportunity that transformed his own life by raising from 9 to 20 percent the cap on the amount of money that can be transferred from school districts to charter schools in districts whose MCAS scores are in the bottom 10 percent statewide.

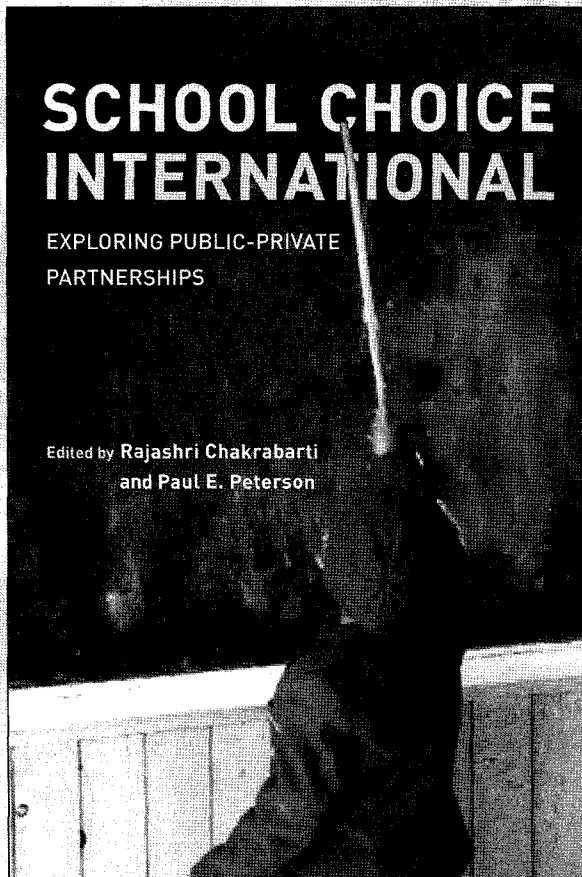
So far, he has chosen instead to dismantle reform and replace the singular focus on student achievement that was the key to education reform’s success with a wish list that would likely cost taxpayers an additional \$2 billion per year. With the new Board of Elementary and Secondary Education stripped of independence, there is no entity left that can operate outside the political arena with the sole mission of improving academic performance.

Results released in September 2008 showed a sharp drop in MCAS pass rates and flat or declining scores in the elementary and middle school grades and in many urban districts. While 15 years of progress will not be undone overnight, as the Patrick administration’s efforts to dismantle reform continue, such drops are likely to become the rule. It is the price we will pay for Massachusetts policymakers snatching defeat from the jaws of the Commonwealth’s historic education-reform victory.

As for President Obama, during the primaries he played to the teachers unions that are a critical Democratic Party constituency by assailing the evils of forcing teachers to “teach to the test.” But once the nomination was secured, he moved to the center, unveiling proposals that included merit pay for teachers and doubling federal charter-school funding. His selection of Arne Duncan, Chicago’s charter-friendly school superintendent, as education secretary also bodes well. Let’s hope that as president he continues down that path rather than the one Governor Patrick has chosen, and that he applies the lessons from the successful reforms in Massachusetts to federal education policy.

Charles Chieppo is a senior fellow and James Gass is director of the Center for School Reform at Pioneer Institute, a Massachusetts public-policy think tank.

The state senate voted to allow some teachers to be licensed even if they failed the required exam three times.



SCHOOL CHOICE INTERNATIONAL

Exploring Public-Private Partnerships
edited by Rajashri Chakrabarti
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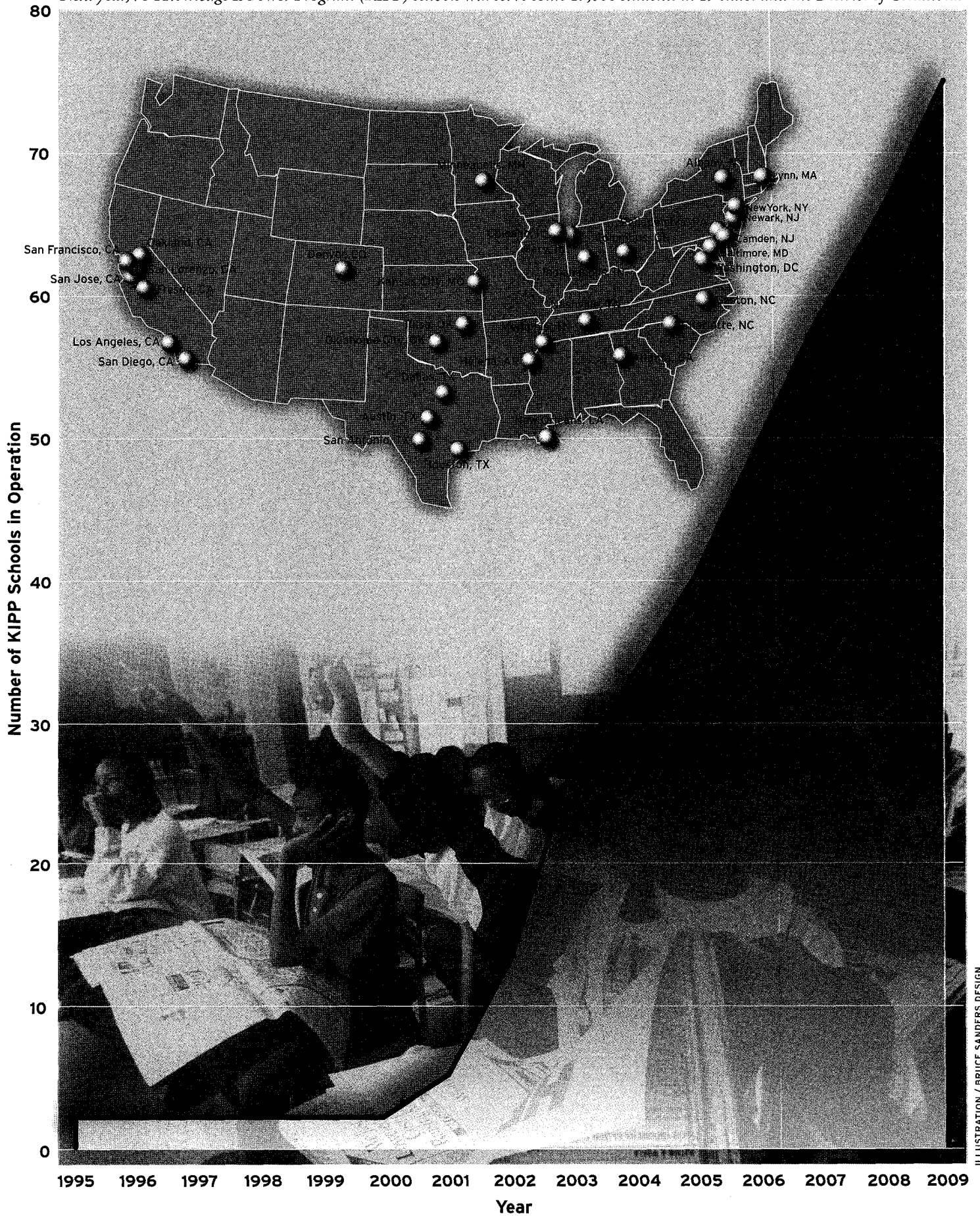
"A timely and useful collection, which demonstrates once again that educational policy in the United States has much to learn from the experience of other countries, including India, Colombia, and Chile, where educational freedom is alive and well and taking constantly-evolving forms."
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"Chakrabarti and Peterson's *School Choice International* is a very current yet comprehensive examination of school choice programs around the world. In readable and rigorous chapters, highly regarded scholars explain how families choose schools and the consequences of those choices in countries as diverse as India, Chile, and England. If you want to understand the full range of choice-based reforms in use somewhere today, this book is essential reading." — Caroline M. Hoxby, Scott & Donya Bommer Professor of Economics, and Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution

288 pp., 19 illus., \$38 cloth

From Coast to Coast (Figure 1)

Next year, 75 Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) schools will serve some 17,000 students in 19 states and the District of Columbia.



Work Hard.

Be

The roots and reality of the Knowledge Is Power Program

Nice.

BY JAY MATHEWS

*From WORK HARD BE NICE by Jay Mathews. (c) 2009 by Jay Mathews.
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In 1994, fresh from a two-year stint with Teach For America, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin inaugurated the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) in Houston with an enrollment of 49 5th graders. By this Fall, 75 KIPP schools will be up and running, setting children from poor and minority families on a path to college through a combination of hard work, long hours, innovative teaching, and a “no excuses” school culture.

Jay Mathews, education columnist at the *Washington Post*, has written for more than two decades about schools where children from low-income families succeed academically. His articles about mathematics teacher Jaime Escalante, whose disadvantaged East L.A. students regularly aced the AP calculus exam, inspired the film *Stand and Deliver*. Mathews also developed the Challenge Index for rating high schools according to their success in encouraging students to take college-level Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.



Mathews' latest book, *Work Hard. Be Nice: How Two Inspired Teachers Created the Most Promising Schools in America* was published by Algonquin Books in January 2009 and chronicles how two young teachers created the most talked-about school reform in the U.S. today. The excerpts below tell the story of how the KIPP network began and reveal why the KIPP model works so well.

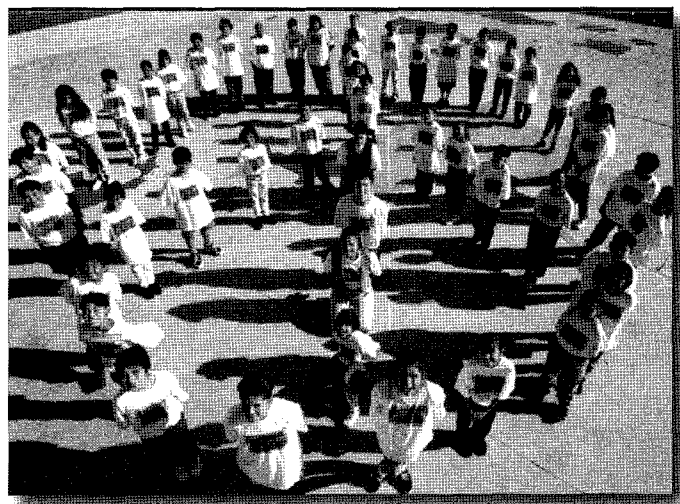
The Seeds of KIPP

In January 1992, as Levin and Feinberg were writing up their applications for Teach For America, a tall, dark-haired former U.S. Education Department policy aide named Scott Hamilton was showing up for his first day at a new job. He had been hired by the Washington office of the Edison project, an effort to improve inner-city schools and make a profit. The only person Hamilton found there was a talkative red-haired 23-year-old researcher named Stacey Boyd, in whom he took an immediate interest.

In the annals of the charter school movement, the meeting of Hamilton and Boyd would take on considerable significance, particularly in the history of KIPP. By the time they married in 1997, as Feinberg and Levin were completing the second year of their new schools, Hamilton was the chief charter school official for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Boyd was establishing what would be a successful Boston charter school as she completed her MBA at Harvard. By 1999, the couple was in San Francisco, where Boyd had started a new company, Project Achieve, developing a way to assess the progress of every child in a classroom. She was also working with schools in Chicago and had hired Colleen Dippel to help there. Hamilton was working in San Francisco for two of the richest people in the country, Don and Doris Fisher, founders of the GAP clothing stores. They wanted him to find education projects where money from their new Fisher Foundation could make a difference.

Boyd, Hamilton, and the Fishers were too busy to watch much television. None of them had seen the "60 Minutes" report on KIPP in September 1999. But several city mayors and state governors had, and were enthralled. Some called Feinberg and Levin, asking if they could open another 15 or 20 KIPP schools right away. Such calls were naive, but they intrigued Feinberg. He urged Levin to join him in the effort to take KIPP national. Levin agreed that something had to be done. He liked the idea of teaching successful inner-city teachers how they might start their own schools. Feinberg looked for people who, unlike them, knew something about building large organizations. One of his first calls was to Boyd. She was an entrepreneur. She was very familiar with how his school worked and what it could do. She was thrilled with the idea and called Hamilton right away.

Hamilton promised to check it out. In the back of his mind, though, was the memory of the Fishers' cautionary note when they hired him. They said they did not want to start anything new. They were too old to launch another GAP. They wanted Hamilton to find worthwhile projects to support and help grow, but no start-ups. Hamilton visited KIPP Houston, observed Feinberg at full speed, and saw what Boyd was talking about. He visited KIPP New York and got a dose of Levin's wily charm. Hamilton hadn't discussed KIPP in any detail with the Fishers. At the end of



They decided to call the main principles the Six Pillars, later whittled down to five. Some people said it sounded too Islamic, too T.E. Lawrence. But the Five Pillars stuck.

feature
KIPP MATHEWS

1999, Hamilton popped a tape of the “60 Minutes” report into the VCR in Don Fisher’s office. When the segment ended, Fisher’s comment was, “What the hell am I supposed to do with that?”

“I don’t know yet, but something,” Hamilton said. “This is worth something.”

Dining at their favorite San Francisco restaurant, Plump Jack, Hamilton asked Boyd what she thought of an idea forming in his mind—business training for charter school founders, focused on what made KIPP work. Boyd liked it. Hamilton got moving, still not telling the Fishers what he was up to. They did not want to do anything new. What he was thinking was very new, and very big. He invited Feinberg and Levin to meet him in Chicago in late January 2000 to conceive a KIPP master plan. Each of them could bring one other person. Hamilton asked Boyd to come. Levin selected his sister Jessica. Feinberg brought one of his most innovative reading teachers, Elliott Witney, who would eventually become principal of the original KIPP school in Houston.

The conversation in a suite on the 37th floor of the Fairmont Hotel lasted eight hours. Hamilton began with a PowerPoint presentation. He predicted that by the third or fourth year they could be training 150 school leaders. What would the KIPP schools have in common? Hamilton brought in a large easel, flipping over each page as it filled with ideas. The big points seemed obvious: high expectations for all students, a longer school day, a principal totally in charge, an emphasis on finding the best teachers, rewards for student success, close contact with parents, a focus on results, a commitment to prepare every child for a great high school, and, most importantly, college. They decided to call the main principles the Six Pillars, later whittled down to five. Some people said it sounded too Islamic, too T. E. Lawrence. But the Five Pillars stuck.

Boyd thought the meeting was going too well. New organizations were breeding grounds for dissent. They had to talk about that. By afternoon she was at the easel, picking at scabs in the Levin-Feinberg relationship, looking for unresolved issues in what had been their surprising and exciting but largely unexamined success.

She saw the three big men at the table. (At 6-foot-4, her husband was taller than even the KIPP founders. Witney, aware he was the least prominent person present, was 5-foot-4.) They had plenty of youth and energy and big ideas, but how were they going to make decisions together? If two of them thought an applicant for the leadership program should be accepted, and the other disagreed, how would they resolve that? If one of them thought that corporate human relations training should have two full days in the leadership course, and the others thought it only needed a couple of hours, how would they work that out?

They nodded patiently and said they could handle that. The idea was to give each school leader the same freedom to innovate that Levin and Feinberg had enjoyed, just so they showed good results. They had the confidence of youth. Three of the six people in the room, Levin, Feinberg, and Witney, had not yet reached their 30th birthdays. The oldest person was Jessica Levin, about to turn 35.

Hamilton still had to persuade two members of a very different generation, Don Fisher, 71, and Doris Fisher, 68, to give a large chunk of their money to these kids. He took the Fishers to see Levin’s school, starting the tour in the P.S. 31 portion of the building so they could contrast the noise and disorder with the quiet intensity of KIPP’s fourth-floor sanctuary. (Doris Fisher was pleased to discover that one of Levin’s grandmothers was the daughter of her father’s law partner.)

Hamilton spent several weeks writing and rewriting a business plan. It was going to cost at least \$15 million. He did not think the Fishers were going to react very well. It was a start-up, and it wasn’t going to be a certain success. He confessed to Boyd a sense of doom, and a pugnacious willingness, if the Fishers said no, to quit and find some other backer for the KIPP expansion. He sent one copy of the business plan to each of the Fishers. Despite his apprehensions, the Fishers loved the idea.

Don said he had never thought of running schools in the same way he ran a company. But as he considered the KIPP plan, it dawned on him that schools were a business, and charter schools in particular were a business. They needed principals who were trained in management fundamentals and could make their own decisions. He might have sounded gruff after he saw the “60 Minutes” video, but he had actually been moved by it. He wanted to get going right away. He welcomed Feinberg and Levin to a meeting at his office overlooking San Francisco Bay.

“So Mike and Dave, you’re really thinking you can pull this off, huh?”

“Well, Mr. Fisher, I don’t know,” Levin said, “but we’d be more than happy to use your money to find out.”

It was eventually decided that Feinberg, with Dippel, would move to San Francisco to be the chief executive officer of the new KIPP Foundation. No one was surprised. Feinberg told friends, including Levin, that Levin would be content to raise enough money to fully endow his school, sign an agreement that would guarantee KIPP New York enough space for the next 100 years, keep teaching fifth-grade math, and be as happy as a pig in a barnyard. For a while they amused themselves by pretending the decision was up in the air. If they were in a bar with a dartboard, Levin would declare that the first to hit the bulls-eye would go to San Francisco.

Feinberg moved west and discovered that Don Fisher was even more impatient than he and Hamilton were. Laura

D'Andrea Tyson, the former chief economic advisor to President Clinton and the dean of the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley, quickly said yes when Fisher, chair of her school's board, asked if she could provide space and faculty experts for the business training part of what they were going to call the Fisher Fellowship leadership course. Feinberg, Hamilton, and Levin were pleased that Tyson, unlike other business school deans they contacted, did not suggest they involve education school faculty in the project. All three of them distrusted education schools. Feinberg and Levin planned to do most of their recruiting among Teach For America veterans like themselves. They thought such people would have the most drive and imagination, and the most experience improvising in difficult circumstances.

But it seemed to Hamilton they were rushing it. The original plan was to start that summer. The principals in training would take classes at Haas for two months, while they completed the paperwork that would launch their schools. In the fall they would work at one or both of the KIPP schools. By the new year, they would be in the cities they had chosen for their schools, recruiting teachers and students and finding a space for 70 to 80 fifth graders in the summer of 2001. Like Levin and Feinberg, they would add a new grade every year until they had fifth-through-eighth-grade middle schools of about 300 students.

It was already May. Hamilton felt they did not have enough time. They had selected four Fisher fellows. One dropped out, and the other three looked good, although headstrong. Susan Schaeffler, who would start the KEY Academy in D.C., and North Carolina teacher Caleb Dolan had rejected Feinberg and Levin's request that they start schools in Atlanta, where Governor Roy Barnes was drooling over the KIPP results. The third fellow, a teacher at KIPP Houston named Dan Caesar, was happy to start a second school in Houston, as he was asked to do.

Hamilton went to see Don Fisher. "We've got to pull the plug," he said. "We've got to take a breath and then do all this next year so we have time to plan it and do it well. I think we are just throwing stuff together here too fast."

Fisher smiled. Feinberg, Hamilton, and Levin had no business training. He figured they would make mistakes. He explained to Hamilton, based on a half century of experience, that it was much better to get started and address problems as they came up, rather than sit at a desk and try to plan for everything that could go wrong. "Let's keep throwing stuff together," he said. "You are going to learn more by just getting started than you are going to learn over the next year studying this. Even if it is imperfect, I promise you it will be better this way."



It's the Teaching

By October 2005, a crisis had developed at one of Levin's new schools, the KIPP STAR College Prep Charter School in Harlem. The sixth-grade math class was not going well. The new teacher was not performing up to the school's standard. At almost any other public school, the problem would have been considered minor, and the solution long term. But Levin and KIPP STAR leader Maggie Runyan-Shefa were considering getting rid of the teacher right away, only three months into the school year.

The soft-spoken young man had come well recommended. He appeared to know his subject. He loved children. But he was a poor classroom manager and motivator. The aisles of his classroom were cluttered. His students were inattentive. A look at their work showed they were falling behind where KIPP wanted them to be.

In most urban schools such failings would have been difficult to detect because the standards were so low, a result of the widespread feeling that not much could be expected from such disadvantaged children. If a teacher's flaws were enough to catch the attention of a principal, she would talk to him and ask that he observe some of the school's veteran instructors. She would encourage him to borrow their techniques. She would never consider firing him in the middle of the term. Anyone she might be able to replace him with would almost certainly be worse.

In the normal course of events, the teacher's disappointing performance might earn him a bad mark on his end-of-year evaluation, and a request that he take more courses and try harder. At the end of his probationary period, if he made no significant improvement, he might be let go. But by that point he would have been in the classroom for three years. The several dozen students he taught during that time would have had to settle for less than adequate instruction. Their chances of success in math in seventh grade, and beyond, would have been sacrificed to administrative inertia and no ready alternatives to bad hiring decisions.

KIPP schools were different. The longer school day made class schedules more flexible. The intense recruiting of the best available educators meant the administrators, including principals like Levin, Feinberg, and Runyan-Shefa, often had exceptional classroom skills and could take over a class if needed. If the sixth-grade teacher at KIPP STAR did not improve, Levin and Runyan-Shefa planned to turn the class over to the school's vice principal, who had a master's degree from Columbia University Teachers College. Runyan-Shefa, as well as Levin's trouble-shooter Jerry Myers, had been working with the math teacher. Levin had stepped in one day, toward the end of the teacher's lesson, to show him some techniques. He showed up the next morning to teach a complete class.

In the little world of KIPP math instructors, Levin was a legendary figure, the best math teacher many of them had ever seen. Runyan-Shefa hoped his reputation would help the young teacher see how much better he could be. Levin had observed the sixth-grade class. He had talked to the teacher and to Runyan-Shefa. He knew that one of the teacher's stumbling blocks was one disruptive student. Levin had this in mind when he walked up the stairs of the five-story brick school on a residential Harlem street, and approached room 433, where the young teacher taught three classes of sixth-grade math every day.

The teacher had his 28 students lined up in the hallway, as he had been asked to do. Levin went to the front of the line and stood outside the closed classroom door. "Everyone face me, please," he said. "Let's go. I'm missing one person's eyes." He waited a moment. "Thank you. I wanted the joy of getting back with you today to finish up what we started yesterday. We need one minute in the room to finish setting up."

Levin reached out to the 11-year-old chief miscreant, who had been asked to stand near the front of the line. He escorted the child, just him, inside the classroom. He shut the door, leaving the other members of the class, and their teacher, out in the hall while he had a private chat with the boy. He shook the sixth grader's hand. "Hi. I'm Mr. Levin. You remember me from yesterday. You don't know me very well, but I think you will find it a bad idea not to listen today. You will enjoy being my friend. Any other options are off the table."

He asked the student about himself. He had the boy help him rearrange the desks and chairs, making the aisles wider and the rows straighter. He opened the classroom door and welcomed everyone in to start on their introductory problems. "Thank you. Go to your desks. We will do the first five problems. Don't worry about putting stuff into your binders. We will all put it into our binders at the end. Directions are on the board. They are also on the sheet, to be done by yourselves. Any questions? Okay. I am missing one person's eyes."

He waited. It was time for the formal opening of the class. "Hi, Kippsters!" Levin said with a smile.

Just two voices said, somewhat uncertainly: "Hi, Mr. Levin."

"How many remember when I spoke to you last? How many of you actually remember what my name is? Veronica?"

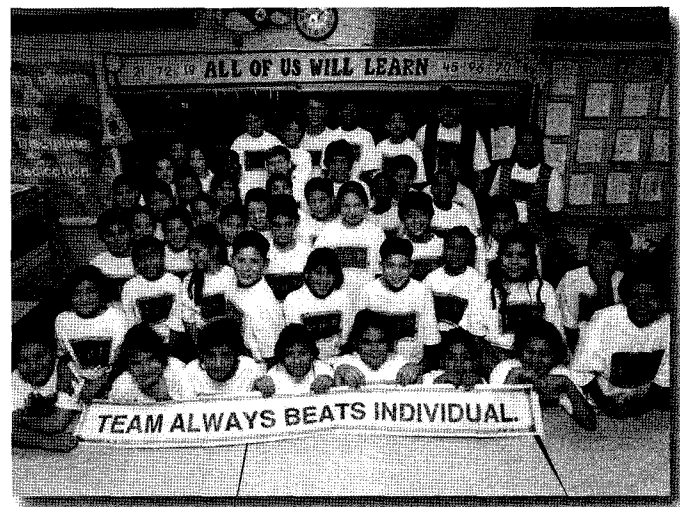
"Mr. Levins?"

"Mr. Levin. There is no 's'. It is like the number eleven without the e in the front."

He tried again: "Hi, KIPP STAR!"

"Hi, Mr. Levin," came a somewhat louder response. He asked them to try again.

"I would like everybody's attention, and do me a favor. When you bump into someone on the street, you don't whine their name, do you? You don't say (he adopted a very



**"Hi. I'm Mr. Levin.
You remember me
from yesterday.
You don't know me
very well, but I
think you will find
it a bad idea not to
listen today. You
will enjoy being
my friend. Any
other options are
off the table."**



“Did you all know that smiling keeps your brain awake? You didn’t know that? When you sit up, you smile. Your brain gets oxygen and when your brain gets oxygen you are smarter and it makes you better looking, and some of you really need to smile a lot more. All RIGHT!”

languid tone) ‘Yo, . . . what’ssss up?’ You’ve got to deal with someone. So we are going to learn to interact normally.”

“Hi, KIPP STAR.”

“Hi, Mr. Levin!”

“Hi, KIPP STAR.”

“Hi, MR. LEVIN!!!”

“Good,” he said. “Not any whining, not that long drawn-out thing.”

The students were sitting straighter than they had been when they sat down. This teacher was annoying, but he had energy. “All right! You smile, right? So we are going to go about 30, 35 minutes together. In that 30 to 35 minutes I do really want to hear from everyone, all different groups and individuals. If I know your name, I will call on you by name, but if I don’t know your name, tell me your name before you start speaking so I can kind of learn your names. With all these beautiful and handsome ladies and gentlemen in the room, I should at least know your names.”

To Levin, a class was a conversation that involved every child. He had to stay positive, and pass that feeling on to them. “This is going to be good, going to be good,” he said, pacing in front of the class. “I love this stuff. All smile. Did you all know that smiling keeps your brain awake? You didn’t know that? When you sit up, you smile. Your brain gets oxygen and when your brain gets oxygen you are smarter and it makes you better looking, and some of you really need to smile a lot more. All RIGHT!”

The problems on the board involved long division. “Shamira, how does 21 go into 42? Two. Anyone confused by that? I am missing one person. Does the two pop up? What is two times 20?”

“40!” several voices said.

“What did I do wrong, man? What did I do wrong on purpose?” he said. The intentional error on the board was an old trick for keeping everyone engaged. Tricky teachers needed close watching. Eleven-year-olds loved correcting their elders.

“I can’t hear you,” he said. A few voices identified the mistake. “Exactly, right under here. Two minus zero?”

“Two!” they said.

“Perfect. Check this out. Raise your hand if you can count by 20s. Okay, now raise your hand if you can count by 62s. Not so easy, right? But the steps are exactly the same. We are going to take a look at this one, we are going to take some notes and you are going to be able to do it on your own.” He employed a standard motivator, the reach for a challenge. Each class was a team. They were drawn to the excitement of fighting and beating a tough opponent. Smart teachers would often offer a problem that, they said, was beyond what kids in other schools were getting.

“How many of you like chicken wings?” Levin asked. “You order them mild, medium, and spicy, right? Mild, medium, and spicy.” He chose metaphors for which he had a genuine

passion. His students seemed to enjoy the vibe. "Raise your hands if you want a mild problem to start? How many want medium? Spicy?"

He started with medium. He called on several different children. He needed to be reminded of some of their names, but as the minutes passed he recognized more of them. No one could avoid participating. He kept moving around the room. "Raise your hand if I lost you. Raise your hand if this is seeming easier to you. Raise your hand if you are almost ready to do it by yourself."

Every child had to get the concept. He was not going to pull too far ahead. "Raise your hand if you got it," he said. "Everyone check me for a second. Everyone track me for a second. This is an important number. You have to pay attention here. This number cannot be bigger than what? This number cannot be bigger than what? Fatima?"

She gave an incorrect answer. He tried a few other students who did not get it. "One step too far," he said. "Eyes up please. Eyes up. We will give you the next one on your own again. Watch this. We said we were going to be done by nine and we are pushing up on the time. You guys are pretty close, though. So watch this."

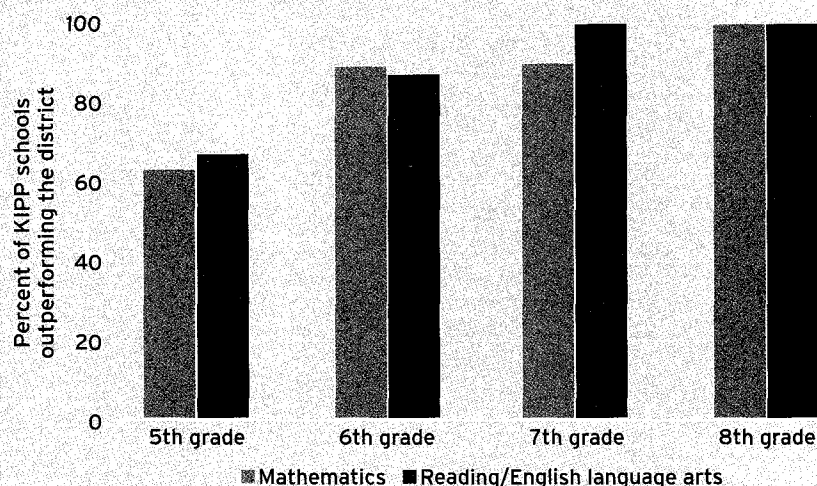
The period was over. Twenty-eight children had watched intently and responded to questions for more than 45 minutes. They seemed to be holding their own. The class bad boy, Levin's special project, had been a model student. The young teacher had taken many notes. There would be several more weeks of extra work for him. Then, still unsatisfied, Runyan-Shefa with Levin's approval would find another job for him in the school not as demanding or as important as sixth-grade math.

The New York State Assessment tests were given to the KIPP STAR sixth graders the following spring. Seventy-three percent of the 78 sixth graders scored at the proficient level or above, compared to 45 percent of all sixth graders in the same Harlem district, and 60 percent of sixth graders in New York State [see Figures 2 and 3].

Ninety-two percent of those KIPP STAR sixth graders were from low-income homes. Ninety-seven percent were black or Hispanic. They had been taught to listen, think, and respond. For most of them it had worked. Their teacher had struggled, but for them the standards had remained high. They would be ready for seventh-grade math, which at KIPP schools was beginning algebra, begun two years earlier than at most American schools. ■

Steady Rise (Figure 2)

The impact of the instructional program and "no excuses" school culture becomes increasingly evident as students in KIPP's mostly urban schools are more likely to outperform their district peers each year.

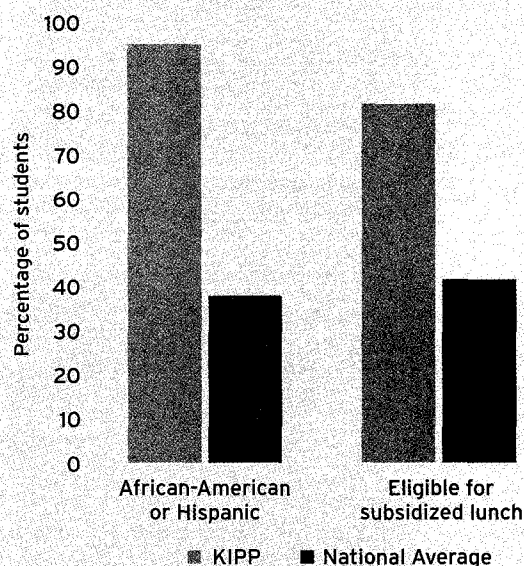


Note: Based on state tests taken at the end of the 2006-07 school year. Outperformance is defined as having a higher percentage of students meet a given threshold (basic or proficient).

SOURCE: KIPP 2007 Report Card

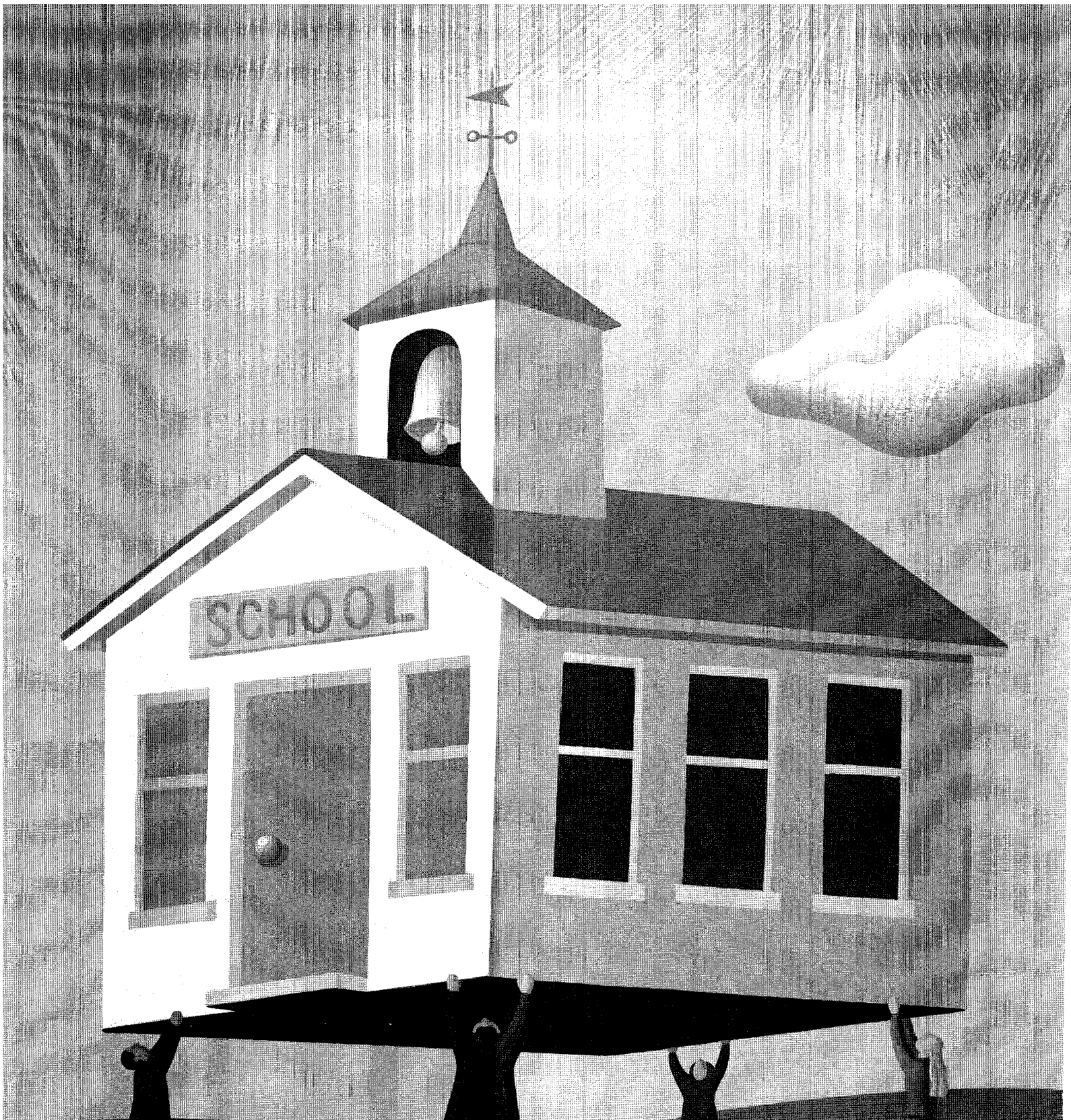
Help Where It's Needed (Figure 3)

KIPP schools serve a student population that is predominantly low-income and minority.



Note: National subsidized lunch data exclude Nevada, which did not report.

SOURCES: National Center for Education Statistics, 2006-2007; KIPP 2007 Report Card



Teacher

Cris Parr stands in a sunny room in an old high school surveying rows of drill presses, saws, and other outmoded industrial behemoths. Clearly no one has taught shop here in a long time, not since the goal was to prepare kids from the struggling neighborhood outside for a life in the trades.

Parr would like someone to haul the machines away so she can replace them with drafting tables configured for computer-aided design. In most high schools, this would be the principal's problem, or something for facilities management. She's a teacher, but

Cooperatives

it's very much her responsibility to change this room full of curios into a place that graduates kids ready for a high-tech workforce.

Parr is one of six members of a teacher cooperative that contracts with Milwaukee Public Schools to run the School for Urban Planning and Architecture, or SUPAR. She thought up the idea for the charter school and negotiated its partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is directly accountable for the success of the 84 students, 93 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

This is precisely the type of small, nimble program envisioned by charter schools' creators. Twenty years ago, when the late Albert Shanker, then president of the American Federation of Teachers, endorsed the notion of innovative schools operating outside conventional district bureaucracies, his aim was to put teachers at the helm. "If you want to hold teachers accountable," he posited, "then teachers have to be able to run the school."

Parr's school is also a lineal descendant of one of the early success stories profiled in Joe Nathan's celebrated 1996 survey, *Charter Schools*. When Parr began to consider applying for a charter, her first stop was the teacher-owned cooperative Minnesota New Country School. Galvanized by its collaborative atmosphere, she and her father, lifelong teacher organizer John Parr, spent the drive home drafting union bylaws that would allow her to start a similar school chartered by a large urban district.

**What
happens
when
teachers
run the
school?**

BY BETH HAWKINS

Fast-forward two decades from Shanker's then-radical proposition and there are nearly 80 teacher-governed charter schools around the country. Although most are legally constituted as worker cooperatives, they better resemble the partnerships long enjoyed by doctors, lawyers, and other professionals used to viewing their practice as a collective good.

The hyperdemocratic programs are no more a panacea for what ails American education than any other single type of school. Test scores run the gamut from abysmal to odds-defying, and at least two schools closed before graduating a single cohort. Co-op schools can be challenging to work in and, because each arrives at a leadership structure via an often-painful organic process, tough to replicate, say policymakers and teachers who have taught in them.

Still, a review of the model can add to the current conversation about improving the quality of teaching, says Ted Kolderie, a senior associate with the St. Paul-based think tank Education|Evolving and the person who first proposed the concept.

"From what we know so far it does appear that, where teachers work in collegial groups, their attitudes and behaviors differ remarkably from those we see in conventional school settings," he says. "Better teacher and student attitudes and behaviors are not in and of themselves better learning. But if you are looking to grow bananas it makes basic sense to plant where there is fertile soil and a lot of rain. Conditions matter."

Fertile Soil

Located in a farm community an hour south of Minneapolis, New Country is widely known as the school whose observant students tipped off the adult scientific community to large numbers of deformed frogs in the area. Since New Country's creation in 1994, three years after Minnesota passed the nation's first charter-school law, thousands of educators have visited, curious about the school's approach to learning: New Country has neither classrooms nor classes. Students (grades 6–12) design projects according to their interests; the teachers help them incorporate state-mandated learning goals.

As interest in school governance innovations has grown, more of the visitors come to learn about the nuts and bolts. New Country has no employees. The teachers are members

of a state-recognized co-op, EdVisions, which provides the school with human resources support and administrative services as needed.

Producer and consumer cooperatives have long been a staple of life in heavily Scandinavian rural Minnesota. The organizations create economies of scale for family farmers and other co-op members, who realize better profits and bigger discounts by joining forces. For decades, Minnesota's rural school districts have relied on cooperatives to supply school psychologists and instructors with highly specialized licenses.

Consistent with that tradition, EdVisions teacher-owners are responsible for every aspect of the learning program, from hiring and evaluating faculty to determining curriculum and setting salaries. For tasks the teachers can't or won't do themselves, such as catering lunch and transporting students, the school contracts with outside vendors. In a year when EdVisions spends less than it brings in, its members decide what to do with the surplus. Often they invest in continuing education, but occasionally shareholders have taken home dividends of \$100 to \$300.

After a visit to New Country made at Kolderie's behest in 2000, representatives of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation were impressed enough to fund its replication. Using \$9 million in Gates money and a federal charter schools technical assistance grant, EdVisions has helped to create more than 40 teacher-governed schools. Minnesota and Wisconsin are home to

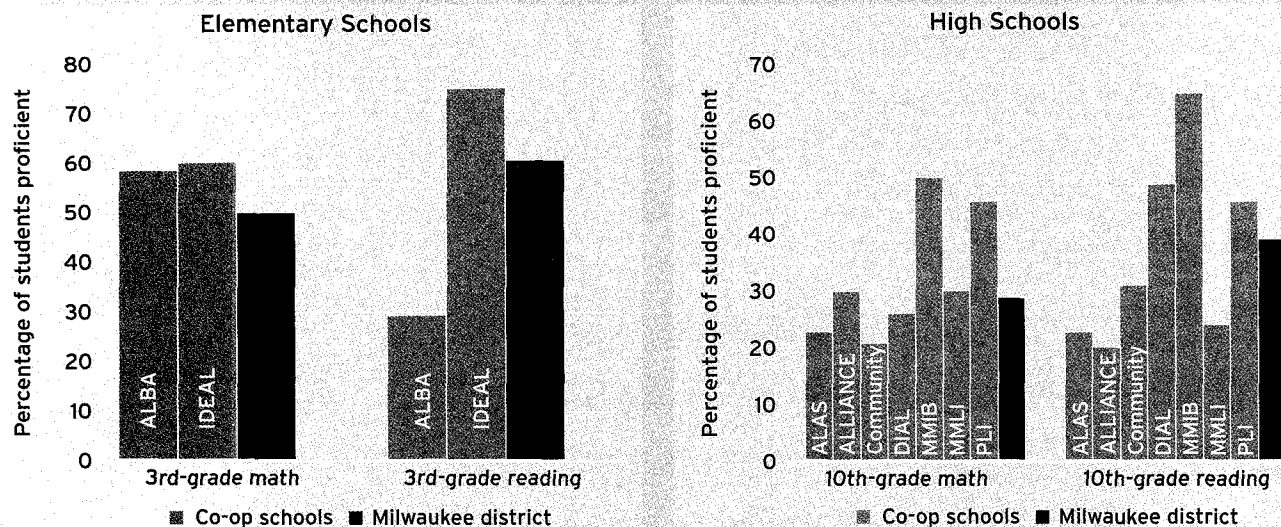
more than half, although the schools operate in 11 states. These days, EdVisions has 250 members teaching in 56 schools. Like New Country, some feature project-based learning, while others have traditional curricula. All share the partnership model, although the legal mechanisms by which teachers control the schools vary according to the laws of the different states.

In Minnesota, for example, teachers can organize as either a worker cooperative or a nonprofit. Each school responds to its respective chartering authority; most EdVisions member schools contract with the co-op for payroll services, benefits administration, and professional development assistance. A separate foundation, EdVisions, Inc., helps write grants.

**Although most
teacher-governed
charter schools
are legally
constituted as
worker cooperatives,
they better
resemble the
partnerships long
enjoyed by doctors,
lawyers, and
other professionals.**

Mixed Bag in Milwaukee (Figure 1)

Achievement in Milwaukee's co-op schools varies widely, though whether this reflects differences in student background or school quality remains uncertain.



Notes: Data are derived from a combination of the 2007 WKCE (Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination) and 2007 WAA-SwD (Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities) results. Schools are Academia Lenguaje y Bellas Artes (ALBA), Advanced Language and Academic Studies (ALAS), Alliance School, Community High School, Downtown Institute of Arts and Letters (DIAL), Individualized Developmental Educational Approaches to Learning Charter School (IDEAL), Marshall Montessori International Baccalaureate High School (MMIB), Milwaukee Learning Laboratory and Institute (MMLI), Professional Learning Institute (PLI).

SOURCE: Wisconsin Successful School Guide, <http://dpi.wi.gov/sig>

Under Wisconsin's more complicated laws, Milwaukee's teacher-governed schools are chartered by the district. Unlike other charters, they remain a part of the district as "instrumentalities," or instruments of the district. The schools employ the district's unionized teachers, who operate as members of a cooperative according to terms spelled out in agreements between the union and the district.

Regardless of their location and legal status, all of the teacher-governed schools in the EdVisions network and those surveyed by Education|Evolving are small and serve disproportionate numbers of low-income and minority students. Several are virtually all African American or Latino. One is 100 percent Native American, and another serves gay and lesbian youth who were bullied at mainline schools.

Student achievement is mixed. For example, on recent Minnesota state tests, 43 percent of students at New Country read proficiently, and just 25 percent scored at the proficient level in math. Twenty-nine percent of the school's 123 students are from low-income families, and 37 percent receive special education services. Avalon High School in St. Paul has fewer special education students but as many who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Sixty percent of its 190 students scored proficient in reading in 2008 and 40 percent did so in

math. At Minneapolis's El Colegio, 86 percent of students are low income and 91 percent are minorities; just 11 percent scored proficient on either test.

In Milwaukee, test scores among the co-op schools also run the gamut. All students at the Academia de Lenguaje y Bellas Artes (ALBA) elementary school are low-income Latinos; 60 percent of 3rd graders passed math exams, and 30 percent read proficiently. Third graders at the Individualized Developmental Educational Approaches to Learning (IDEAL) school had similar scores in math but significantly higher scores in reading. Of the seven co-op high schools with 2007 test scores available, just two had higher percentages of 10th graders demonstrating proficiency in math than the district, three in reading (see Figure 1).

Many Kinds of Accountability

Teachers in co-op schools are often less interested in test scores than in the model's potential for creating cultures that hang onto kids who might otherwise get lost in the cracks. Because they are the administrators, they can adjust lessons to each student's needs. If something isn't working, they have their partners' expertise to draw on.

Observes Raven, a student at Milwaukee's Community High School, "If one's down, all's down. They need each other to stay strong. Each one is like a backbone."

Once they realize they are dealing directly with decision-makers, students are more likely to hold themselves accountable for their learning, says Carrie Bakken, a teacher at St. Paul's Avalon. Avalon has a student-drafted constitution and a congress that produces legislation teachers either accept or veto. Several years ago, the school had a problem with tardiness. The students wrote a bill, debated stakeholders' likely positions, and ultimately drafted a policy that was stricter and more enforceable than anything the adults had considered. Bakken's explanation: Accountability trickles down.

"Adolescents—their life work is to sniff out the hypocrisy of adults; that's their full time job," observes Harvard education professor Richard Elmore. "So you're setting yourself up when you put yourself in that situation. You really do have to act according to your beliefs or the structure you set up doesn't have any authority for kids and it just becomes chaos."

According to veterans, teachers often imagine the absence of a full-time administrator means no hovering boss, but few are prepared for the demands of a system that can't afford free riders. "Small communities tend to be pretty vicious about driving people out who don't do the work because there's no one there to soak up the difference when the work doesn't get done," says Elmore. "They operate according to a pretty powerful normative structure."

Selecting teachers who will fit in is crucial. "We really look at, what do you bring to the table? What's your skill set? Not just licensure," says SUPAR founder Parr. "We have to determine who gets what role: Who's good at external relations? Who's good at fundraising? Who's going to keep things on track?"

Each co-op school establishes salaries according to the priorities of its members. It's important to Avalon's teachers to compete with wages in the St. Paul Public Schools and to recognize teachers' experience with higher pay, for example.

Because Milwaukee's 11 teacher-governed schools all belong to the district, faculty receive the same pay and benefits as other Milwaukee Public Schools employees. The only difference is that the terms of their assignments are spelled out

under union side agreements. The cooperatives that run the schools decide whom to hire and when to return poor performers to the district's hiring pool for reassignment.

All use some form of peer review. At Avalon, parents, students, and teachers—who are referred to as advisers—fill out anonymous evaluations via SurveyMonkey. "The key question is whether an adviser is meeting the job description," says Bakken. "What does that adviser do well, not do well? It ends by asking whether this person should return next year." Faculty who shouldn't return usually realize as much before evaluation time.

"You have to work at maintaining this culture," says Bakken. "There's a huge learning curve for new people."

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Distributing Leadership

Not surprisingly, teacher-run schools can founder on the question of leadership. Because they are what Elmore calls "purpose-built," the schools can appear to be tightly knit communities unified by a strong vision. But, Elmore says, "they tend to be very vulnerable when they confront a problem where they actually have to operate like an organization." Teacher-owners have to figure out how to apportion the responsibility most schools vest in a principal or other authority or risk imploding in the face of external pressures like declining enrollment, poor test scores, or public controversy.

Distributing leadership takes both time and effort. Elmore cites research by the University of Michigan's Roger Goddard that collective efficacy—in this instance, teachers who believe that by working together they are effective—has a powerful effect on student learning. It's a level of functioning that can't be grafted onto one school from another; systems can be copied, but the exact mix has to emerge organically.

Some schools adjust workload or pay for teachers who take on administrative or other extra responsibilities, but establishing a governance structure tied to compensation is less important than dividing duties according to aptitude or inclination, say teachers who work in the schools. Two of Avalon's 14 teachers split their time between the classroom and administration. Bakken is one; she prefers to handle paperwork, while her counterpart enjoys external relations.

Ideally, Avalon's team makes decisions by consensus at its twice-a-week meetings, but members vote when necessary. "When we know there's a contentious issue coming up we talk a lot," says Bakken. "In the meeting we use a 'fist-of-five' system: People hold up five, four, three fingers to indicate some degree of agreement. One or two is disagreement. A closed fist blocks action."

SUPAR's teachers also meet twice a week, but responsibility is vested differently. Because Wisconsin law says one person must sign a school's charter, Milwaukee's teacher-led schools have lead teachers. Originally the job was supposed to rotate every two years at the New School for Community Service, but it took founder Marty Horning so long to accumulate enough knowledge to be efficient he's ended up the de facto go-to person.

Without a strong structure, teacher-run schools are vulnerable to collapse when core members retire or move on. EdVisions cofounder Doug Thomas worries that a minority of the co-op's 250 members are truly invested as owners. "I'll be brutally honest," he says. "About a third of the people who belong really get it. A third like the idea but they're really busy. A third look at their check every month and

wonder, 'Why does my paycheck come from EdVisions? What is that?'" If he had it to do over, Thomas would constitute the schools as nonprofits, chiefly to make it easier for teachers to write grants.

An associate at the policy incubator Education|Evolving, Kim Ferris-Berg, believes ownership matters. "Any given structure may get professionalism for teachers and higher-performing students," she says. "The teacher professional-partnership arrangement maximizes the pressure to do it right because teachers are accountable for results, but results are not guaranteed."

Whatever the details, Kolderie is convinced it's time to hand both authority and responsibility to the same people. "The dominant notion in this country at the moment is that improving teaching is something the boss does," he says. "We might at long last try approaching teachers as professionals; telling them what we want and leaving it to them, organized in collegial groups and made responsible for performance, to figure out how the job can best be done."

Beth Hawkins is a Minneapolis-based writer and covers education, among other topics, for Minnpost.com.

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Teacher Training, Tailor-Made

Top candidates
win customized
teacher
education

One May afternoon in Boston, 85 teachers in training arrived at the bayside campus of the University of Massachusetts for a three-hour class called Family Partnerships for Achievement. The instructors had invited several public school parents to come in and offer the future teachers advice. Take advantage of technology, said one parent. Among mobile families in poverty, home addresses and telephone numbers may be incorrect. Cell phones are a better bet. Text messaging really works. Take a walk around the neighborhood. Another suggestion: find out where your students shop and hang out.

Look parents in the eye, added an instructor. Say, "Hi, It's great to see you." It's difficult to discuss academics or ask parents to do anything for you before you get to know them.

Family Partnerships for Achievement is not a course typical of most master's programs in education. The course was designed with one overriding goal: to prepare teachers to be effective in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). This goal drives every aspect of the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), a district-based program for teacher training and certification that recruits highly qualified individuals to take on the unique challenges of teaching in a high-need Boston school and then guides them through a specialized course of preparation.

BTR is one of a new breed of teacher training initiatives that resemble neither traditional nor most alternative certification programs. By rethinking the relationship between training and hiring, these programs have found promising new ways to prepare educators.

Traditional teacher-training programs, which are usually completed through a college or university, are viewed by most as a vehicle to state certification: you take a standard list of courses and exit with a license to teach and, in some cases, a degree. Such programs, however, have long been derided as impractical: Future teachers learn few skills applicable to real classrooms, and the time and cost necessary to complete the training and certification can discourage people interested in the profession.

BY KATHERINE NEWMAN

ILLUSTRATION / J. T. MORROW

The internship or residency-style program tailors coursework to meet the needs of the particular school or type of school in which the teacher will be employed.



When the alternative certification movement began, with the launch of New Jersey's Provisional Teacher Program in 1983, it famously broke the link between traditional teacher training and certification. Although certification was still the goal, the training was reduced and accelerated in the hopes of creating a "streamlined way to get ultra-talented people into the classroom quickly," says Sandi Jacobs, vice president for policy at the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). There are now 485 alternative certification programs across 47 states.

But in more than half the states, says recent research, so-called alternative routes to certification are all but indistinguishable from traditional programs (see "What Happens When States Have Genuine Alternative Certification?" *check the facts*, Winter 2009). And as with traditional programs, quality varies widely. Of the alternative certification programs the NCTQ surveyed for a 2007 report,

only one-third require a summer teaching practicum and one-quarter provide weekly mentoring for teachers once the school year starts. One-quarter of the programs "take virtually anybody" who applies, says Jacobs, which is alarming considering that alternative programs prepare one-fifth of new teachers nationally.

BTR is implementing a model that emphasizes training teachers on-site in actual classrooms with students and lead teachers, similar to the way medical residents grow into effective doctors by working directly with patients under the guidance of veterans. Instead of following a typical list of course and credit-hour requirements, the organization sponsoring the internship or residency-style program tailors coursework to meet the needs of the particular school or type of school in which the teacher will be employed.

Highlighted in the following pages are three such programs. They have rigorous selection processes, practical

coursework, and tremendous field-based support—and each has an innovative twist.

- In 2004, San Diego-based High Tech High (HTH) became the first charter management organization (CMO) approved to certify its own teachers. The Teacher Intern Program enables HTH to hire individuals best suited for its project-based, interdisciplinary curriculum.
- The Alliance for Catholic Education's (ACE's) Teacher Formation program at the University of Notre Dame is the Teach For America of parochial schools. High-achieving recent college graduates make a two-year service commitment to teach in struggling Catholic schools across the southern states.
- The Boston Teacher Residency was introduced above. For an entire year before becoming teachers of record in Boston public schools, residents apprentice in the classrooms of skilled veterans, who gradually increase the residents' teaching responsibilities.

None of these programs is meant to supplant all others. The crisis facing teacher training is that currently one model *does* dominate. Licensure rules in many states hamstring experimentation by requiring that teacher training programs be run by universities. Those states should revise their requirements to support models such as those profiled here and others that customize teacher training to fit the challenges of particular schools and districts.

High Tech High: Teacher Intern Program

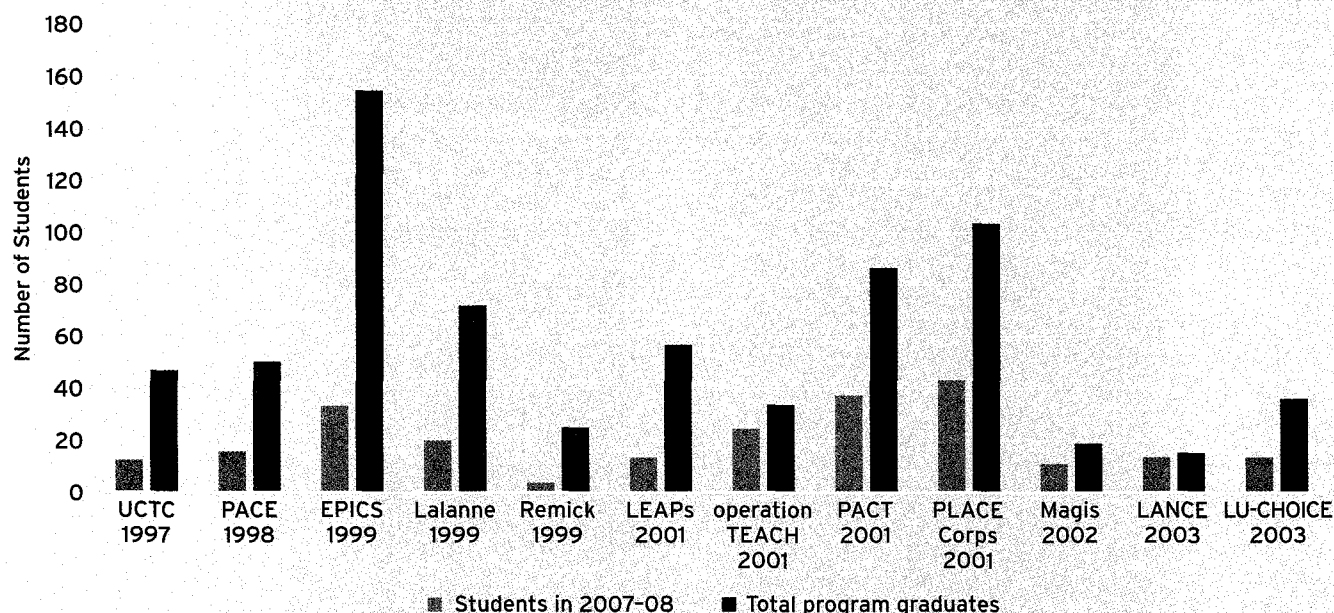
When Anne Duffy applied to teach science at HTH in 2007, she had already completed a master's degree in chemistry at the University of California San Diego, taught organic chemistry to undergraduates, and begun work toward a doctoral degree. She had led kindergarten and 4th- and 5th-grade science enrichment classes. Yet she was barred from working as a public school teacher because she lacked a state teaching certificate.

HTH—with its emphasis on integrating academic and technical education through project-based learning—attracts a number of people like Duffy with "deep content knowledge who had very successful academic careers and wanted to work in an urban school at a time of profound teacher shortage," says founding principal Larry Rosenstock. And HTH was eager to employ them in the HTH "village," which includes six schools on the original Point Loma site. But a 1999 compromise approved by the California legislature required that charter school teachers earn a credential comparable to certificates held by public school teachers, in return for lifting the cap on charters across the state. HTH fashioned a solution and, with state approval, began to certify its own teachers.

On a structural level, HTH's Teacher Intern Program operates like other alternative certification programs. For three weeks over the summer, interns begin cost-free coursework and

Notre Dame's Followers (Figure 1)

Service programs modeled on the Alliance for Catholic Education now train more than 400 teachers a year for Catholic schools.



Note: Programs shown are as follows: Urban Catholic Teacher Corps (UCTC), Boston College; Pacific Alliance for Catholic Education (PACE), University of Portland; Educational Partners in Catholic Schools (EPICS), Seton Hall University; Lalanne, University of Dayton; Remick Fellowship Program, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota; Lutheran Educational Alliance in Parochial Schools (LEAPs), Valparaiso University; Teachers Enlisted to Advance Catholic Heritage (operation TEACH), College of Notre Dame of Maryland; Providence Alliance for Catholic Teachers (PACT), Providence College; Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education (PLACE Corps), Loyola Marymount University; Magis, Creighton University; LaSallian Association of New Catholic Educators (LANCE), Christian Brothers University; and Loyola University Chicago Opportunities in Catholic Education (LU-CHOICE).

Additional UCCE programs have recently been established: Learning Through Understanding by Mentoring and Engaging New Teachers (LUMEN), University of Great Falls, Montana; Gulf Region Academy for Catholic Educators (GRACE), University of St. Thomas-Houston.

SOURCE: University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE)

create a syllabus and unit of study for the beginning of the year. They participate in professional development with veteran staff at the school that hires them as official teachers of record. Interns earn the same salary and benefits as other HTH teachers. During the school year, coursework resumes in the early evening. HTH assigns each intern a mentor, who guides and supports the trainee's development.

In their second year, interns wrap up program requirements with state-mandated teaching performance tasks called the California Teaching Performance Assessment (CA-TPA). Through four tasks—written responses to prompts and one videotaped lesson—new teachers are expected to connect state standards to effective teaching practices. After successfully completing the tasks, interns are recommended by the HTH Governing Board to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

One hundred eight staff members are engaged in official mentoring and/or adult learning at HTH, says Rob Riordan, the spirited director of instructional support for all HTH schools. Interns and mentors, who share grade level and/or content area, watch each other in action as often as possi-

ble. Mentoring, Riordan says, is an ongoing "professional development conversation" made possible, in part, by an inventive schedule. HTH built an hour-long common planning period into the beginning of every school day, before students arrive. When Rosenstock initially experimented with the sacred morning hour during his days as a principal in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he found that "there was something about first period that let [teachers] think about four years from now." The credentialing program also takes advantage of the hour: The fall semester class called Classroom Management and Assessment, which is facilitated by the interns' mentors, meets over six Monday mornings during the 7:15–8:15 AM block.

While the Teacher Intern Program is not a degree-granting program, HTH does offer master's degrees through its Graduate School of Education (more on that below). In both programs, HTH values practical coursework. HTH keeps interns in classes for as little time as possible. At most universities, according to Jennifer Husbands, founding director of the HTH Graduate School of Education (GSE), one unit or credit equals 10 or 15 hours of class time and 5 hours of independent work.

"We kind of flip that on its head," she says. At HTH, one credit equals 5 hours of class time and 10 hours of independent work, or time with students. "It makes sense for an intern program" to structure coursework this way, says Husbands. "They are getting credit for their time spent teaching in the classroom."

In a typical fall semester, interns take six classes, which sounds far too demanding, but each one differs in credits and hours. Teaching Methods, Curriculum Design, and Classroom Settings is worth three credits and meets on just four Tuesdays in October from 4:15 to 7:15 PM. Technology in Portfolio Development, one credit, takes place on a Saturday from 8 AM to 1 PM. Interns complete an accelerated course of study in one year, and program staff make sure that every aspect of a streamlined course directly relates to interns' work with students.

Critics will point out that HTH has the rare luxury of developing a tight-knit, practical teacher preparation program in-house: It has enough talent on staff to teach the intern classes. Its mentor pool grows each year, as newer teachers gain experience with the HTH design principles.

Is the Teacher Intern Program too HTH-oriented? (The program only accepts teachers employed by HTH, although it hopes to invite outside applicants in the future.) Aren't we looking for examples of effective alternative routes to replicate or take "to scale," as they say?

Not really, says Rosenstock: "Let's unscale.... When we standardize the curriculum and we standardize how teachers get prepared, we just suck the oxygen out of the system."

The HTH GSE opened in the fall of 2007. Its mission is to prepare experienced teachers, through a master of education degree (M.Ed.) in either school leadership or teacher leadership, to spread innovation and develop high-expectations learning environments for all students. The GSE currently serves 30 master's candidates, 20 teachers from within and 10 from outside HTH.

Graduate students take courses but spend most of their time—as in the credentialing program—putting theory to practice in the HTH community, where they work with administrators, teachers, and students. Training and empowering educators to put best practices in place as staff leaders in their home schools, says Stacey Caillier, director of the Teacher Leadership M.Ed. program, is one way HTH can "become scalable and sustainable and actually cause change."

Alliance for Catholic Education: Teacher Formation Program

With the dishes drying and another tough day of teaching at Memphis's inner-city Catholic schools behind them, five young teachers settled into deep couches in their living room. They gathered there most nights to "vent about the day's ridiculousness," joke around, or watch humorous YouTube clips—anything to "break up the monotony" of



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lesson planning and grading student work, said Patrick Manning.

The group had met seven months earlier, in June 2007, when they arrived at Notre Dame's campus for an eight-week training session, the first leg of the Alliance for Catholic Education's two-year Teacher Formation Program. ACE was founded in 1993 to attract to Catholic schools talented college graduates who did not necessarily major in education. ACE's leaders view the program foremost as a service experience but harbor the underlying hope that graduates will continue working in education after completing their commitment, much like recruits to Teach For America. Both programs run accelerated, no-frills courses over the summer before sending new teachers to high-need classrooms. Both programs offer support through a cohort model: ACE teachers must live in small groups, whereas

TFA corps members frequently room together by choice. The ACE teachers in one house are typically spread across two to four schools in the area. ACE runs 32 houses in the 14 mostly southern states the program serves.

Memphis Catholic High School employs a new batch of ACE teachers every 2 years and has for the past 10 years. The principal sends ACE a request form listing subject-matter vacancies, and ACE fills the need. Like many schools in which ACE places teachers, Memphis Catholic would struggle to replenish its highly transient staff without the program (see "Can Catholic Schools Be Saved?" *features*, Spring 2007). ACE characteristically sends its teachers to inner-city schools, although a few go to rural communities. Overall, 85 percent of ACE teachers serve poor students.

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ACE is highly selective, accepting only one in four candidates, but acknowledges that a high GPA is not always a prerequisite for great teaching. The interview is vital to the selection process. "ACE staff spends substantial time talking to potential applicants about the program to help them discern whether ACE would be a good fit," wrote ACE director John Staud in an email.

ACE participants earn a cost-free master of education degree from Notre Dame and are eligible for an Indiana teaching certificate upon completion of the program. Neither a master's degree nor certification is required to teach in Catholic schools, but ACE has long believed that capability in the classroom derives from teachers' knowledge of curriculum development, instructional strategies, and assessment tools, along with classroom-based training. The fact that the master's degree provides a "route to public school certification," wrote Tom Doyle, ACE's academic director, is "a side benefit."

As at HTH, the distribution of credit hours values teaching time over time spent in university classrooms. In the first week of summer, teachers take a course on classroom design, management, and communicating with parents. A course on the history of Catholic education is also completed in the first week and a course on technology by the second.

A two-credit summer school practicum begins after the second week and typically lasts six weeks. ACE students co-teach from 8 to 11 AM in public and Catholic school classrooms with a summer instructor and are observed and advised by a master teacher.

"Some people learned what not to do" by watching mediocre instructors, says Laura Farrell of her summer school experience. Others, like Patrick Manning and colleague Robbie Rhine-smith, were thrown into lead teaching positions and, though it initially overwhelmed them, they welcomed the challenge.

Over half of all credits are accumulated during the two summer sessions. The only coursework teachers are responsible for during the fall semester is Clinical Seminar, which is taken all four semesters. Twice a month students email reflections to one of six university faculty members who are assigned to 30 ACE students each. In their reflections, new teachers describe one of their practices, discuss why they're using it (linking it to specific research) then use supporting evidence to explain the results of the practice and where to take it next. Students' reflections and supervisors' responses are automatically added to an electronic academic portfolio that can be accessed anytime.

In the second semester of year one, ACE adds an online course called Topics in Education Psychology. Students read assigned material, take online quizzes, and write summative papers, which they submit electronically for feedback, on four topics the faculty feel are relevant, such as "intelligence and assessment" or "student motivation."

Like alternative certification programs, ACE considers the teachers' classroom immersion their teaching practicum,

granting eight credits for an ongoing class called Supervised Teaching. ACE teachers receive support from a school-based mentor assigned by their principal. In addition to advising on curriculum, behavior management, and positive family engagement, says Doyle, mentors are supposed to "introduce ACE teachers to the local culture of the city and into the school itself."

The Memphis teachers were generally lukewarm about their mentors. High achievers expect to excel as new teachers, and several of the new teachers desired more critical feedback from their mentors. Yet ACE encourages mentors to provide a "listening ear" and to leave constructive evaluations to principals. Manning suggested that at Catholic schools teachers "wear many hats" and tight schedules get in the way of assigned mentoring.

In addition, ACE university supervisors visit their teachers once a semester for at least two periods, sandwiched by pre- and postvisit conferences, which complement the Clinical Seminar course. Four visits over two years may not seem like much, but the two-year idea exchange between an ACE teacher and a respected veteran provides far more follow-up than most other alternative certification programs.

Although ACE provides many financial benefits—including the master's degree, room and board for two summer sessions, \$400 in travel stipends each year plus airfare to and from the December retreat, and health insurance—ACE teachers are paid considerably less than a typical Catholic school salary. ACE gives them a monthly stipend of \$900 to \$1,100 before taxes, which is adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences. From this, teachers contribute around \$300 to rent, utilities, and shared food expenses.

Notre Dame funds the program with fees that participating schools contribute in lieu of paying the ACE teachers' salaries. Grants and donations from foundations and private benefactors support the program as well. ACE has placed nearly 1,000 teachers in Catholic schools since its inception. The program's success has led to replication of the model in a dozen colleges and universities (see Figure 1).

Boston Teacher Residency

When Sarah Benis Scheier-Dolberg stepped out of her classroom during a history lesson at the New Mission High School in Roxbury, Massachusetts, Joanna Taylor, a teaching resident, assumed control. She led the seniors through terms like "World Bank" and "International Monetary Fund." Several students looked at her, confused.

"Who else is totally lost?" Taylor asked. Meanwhile, Benis Scheier-Dolberg reentered the classroom and saw hands rise.

"That's okay," said Benis Scheier-Dolberg. "Hold onto the confusion."

The two women continued the lesson together. Taylor explained the group work assignment; Benis Scheier-Dolberg monitored student participation and fielded questions. They

had been shaping the curriculum together since the beginning of the school year. By late October, at the time of this lesson, they were co-teaching easily. In mid-November, Taylor completed a week of what BTR calls “lead teaching,” during which residents teach at least one class a day by themselves. Starting in February and through the end of the year, Taylor planned and taught two of Benis Scheier-Dolberg’s classes full-time.

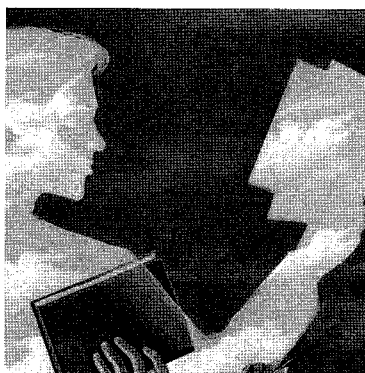
The collaboration between Benis Scheier-Dolberg and Taylor illustrates the core of BTR’s model: provide aspiring teachers a year of hands-on experience under the guidance of a veteran educator.

BTR was launched in 2003 by the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) in a joint response to what then-superintendent Thomas Payzant saw as impediments to the district’s success. BPS was burdened by a turnover rate for new teachers of 50 percent in the first three years and, despite an abundance of university-based teacher preparation programs in the greater Boston area, lacked teachers of color, teachers equipped for urban school challenges, and those certified in the hard-to-staff areas of math, science, and special education.

BTR set out to recruit and prepare new teachers in ways that existing programs did not, and to provide enough support to retain them. Five years later, the program supplies BPS with more teachers than any other preparation program. Although the data are fairly green—teachers from the first cohort just entered their fifth year—just under 90 percent of all graduates still teach in BPS.

BTR has bloomed from a nascent cohort of 12 residents in 2003 to nearly 500 applicants for around 75 spots in school year 2008–09. To attract the diverse teachers the district badly wants, recruitment director Monique Davis organizes

During the 13-month residency, residents spend four full days a week at their host schools, primarily in the classroom of a mentor.



information sessions at community and afterschool centers and churches and in the homes of BTR graduates. She uses historically black colleges and universities with Boston alumni clubs to advertise BTR and make connections at institutions as far as South Carolina, for example, where she visited 10 schools in four days. Her team also mails a recruitment letter to every classroom paraprofessional with a bachelor’s degree in the district. The fact that BTR achieves diversity is in itself a recruitment tool, says program director Jesse Solomon: “I think having a cohort that’s half people of color makes a difference to other people of color coming to that program.”

BTR provides residents a stipend of \$11,400 during the training year and automatically loans residents the \$10,000 program tuition, forgiving one-third for every year graduates teach in Boston’s public schools. Residents also receive a \$4,725 Education Award from AmeriCorps upon completing the program, which many use to pay back the \$4,000 in tuition costs for the University of Massachusetts master’s degree. Other perks include need-based childcare funds and health insurance.

BTR is highly selective compared to most teacher preparation programs, accepting one in six applicants. According to Solomon, the selection process has four stages. Making the four-year commitment to Boston—one resident year followed by three years of induction, assuming graduates want full tuition forgiveness—is the first stage: “They’re not right for our kids if they’re only going to teach for a year or two,” says Solomon.

The second stage involves the traditional paper trail: a resumé, essays, transcript, and recommendations. Solomon admits that BTR’s commitment to high-need areas such as math and science means rejecting many candidates with impressive grades and leadership experience. BTR shapes enrollment so that more than half of residents at the secondary level earn their certification in high-need areas.

BTR then invites promising applicants to a selection day at one of its host schools. Over the course of the day, candidates teach a five-minute lesson, go through two rounds of interviews, and complete a writing assessment and group problem-solving exercise. By the end of the day, nearly 20 different “raters,” including human resources representatives from BPS, BTR mentors, site directors, former residents, and BPE staff, have observed candidates for evidence of “leadership ability” and “persistence,” says Solomon.

The preparation year becomes the fourth stage of the selection process. During the 13-month residency, residents spend four full days a week at their host schools, primarily in the classroom of a mentor. Over two summer sessions and during the school year on Wednesday afternoons and all day Friday, residents take classes toward a master’s degree in education. Through a unique partnership with the University of Massachusetts, BTR has the flexibility to

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hire and oversee a range of instructors and design its own program of study.

BTR starts the initial two-month summer session with instruction on classroom management and lesson planning. Residents then break into grade-level and subject-area groups for content-specific instruction. During the school year, residents take a typical load of reflective seminars and methods courses in addition to a few innovative yearlong courses that meet less frequently and address equity and achievement in the urban school context. Ever responsive to the district's needs, residents graduate with a head start on coursework toward a special education license in addition to earning a Massachusetts Initial Teacher License. BTR will soon offer coursework for ESL licensure as well.

Urban residencies like BTR are great, people say, but can we fund them? Solomon and Anissa Listak, executive director of the recently founded Urban Teacher Residency Institute (UTRI), insist that investing in teacher preparation up front will save the staggering sums wasted by teacher turnover. According to the UTRI, "the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future pegs the average cost to recruit, hire, and lose a teacher at \$50,000."

The urban residencies currently running in Boston, Chicago, and Denver were initially funded by venture capitalists

and entrepreneurs including Martin J. Koldyke, founder of the Golden Apple Foundation in Chicago, Boston's Strategic Grant Partners, and the Boettcher Foundation in Denver. The programs operate on budgets of various sizes. Chicago pays its residents a stipend of \$32,000, while Denver residents receive \$10,000. Programs also pay mentors differing amounts and employ varying numbers of support staff.

Four new programs, in New York, Chattanooga, Philadelphia, and Denver, will open in 2009. Bills pending in Congress would expand federal funds for teacher residency programs. In the long term, collecting data that could link student achievement to resident teachers will be important for sustaining interest in and support for residency models. BTR is pleased to have Harvard professor of education and economics Thomas Kane "working on a value-added model study for us," says Solomon.

The study will help BTR improve, says Solomon, "but it also allows the district to have leverage with other teacher education programs." In other words, a "conversation about who's preparing teachers and how well they're being prepared," says Solomon, should lead to a revitalizing competition between all types of preparation programs.

Katherine Newman, a former New York City Teaching Fellow, is a writer and teacher at KIPP Academy Nashville.



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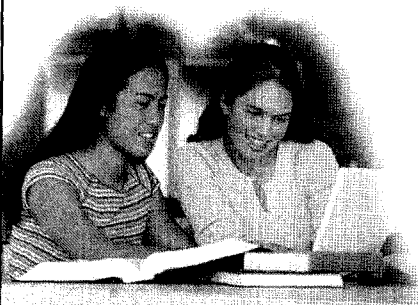
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E Pluribus Unum?

Two longtime school reformers debate the merits of the national curriculum

The push for a national curriculum is gaining momentum as reformers press states to acknowledge “world class” benchmarks for student achievement. The topic had been dormant since Clinton-era efforts to promote “voluntary national standards” yielded little more than charges of political correctness. With No Child Left Behind now stirring concerns about disparate state assessments and sometimes incoherent state standards, has the time come for the new president and Congress to press forward on a national curriculum? Chester E. Finn Jr., *Education Next* senior editor and longtime champion of standards-based reform, says unequivocally “Yes!” and lays out his vision of what it should look like and how it should work. Deborah Meier, founder of New York City’s Central Park East Schools and author of *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem*, is equally vehement in arguing “No!” while providing her own set of strategies for improving our nation’s schools.

EDUCATION NEXT: Should the United States have a national curriculum?

Chester Finn: Absolutely, positively yes, provided that we properly define “curriculum,” and ensure that the states’ participation remains voluntary. In the core subjects of English, math, science, and history (including geography and civics, never say “social

studies”), there is absolutely no reason why we ought not ask all young Americans to learn most of the same things while in the elementary and secondary grades. That doesn’t mean all teachers should follow identical lesson plans, that everybody needs to read the same poems and plays, or that a rigid “scope and sequence” should be clamped onto all schools and school systems. But the basic content of, say, 4th-grade English or 6th-



CHESTER FINN



DEBORAH MEIER

ILLUSTRATION / CRAIG LAROTONDA

The national curriculum would cover only content, not pedagogy or instruction. For that we depend on professionals, and we assume and expect that they will differ from one another in their skills, enthusiasms, preferences, and values.
—CF

grade math or 8th-grade science should be the same from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon. And that content should be married to national standards of “proficiency” in these subjects at these grade levels, and joined to national exams by which we determine how well and by whom this is being accomplished.

The curriculum should cover grades K–12 and leave plenty of room for state, local, and building- and classroom-level variation and augmentation. Particularly in grades 11 and 12, it would make sense to offer (as high schools do today) some choice among courses in science, history, and English; one English class might focus on drama, another on creative writing. A charter or magnet school might specialize in art and music, while another concentrates on science and math, in addition to the academic core.

One way to picture the core is the “1,000 question” approach, which blends standards, curriculum, and assessment. Here’s a simple version: The testing body (perhaps a consortium of states, possibly a spin-off from the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]) would publish—this is all totally transparent—maybe 1,000 possible exam questions dealing with, say, 7th-grade science. A generous portion would be open-response and deep-thought queries that probe a student’s ability to make sense of what he or she is learning, not just parrot it back or fill in bubbles. The national end-of-course exam in 7th-grade science would consist of a subset of those questions. Any student able to answer all 1,000 would likely get a perfect score on the exam.

But 1,000 is obviously too many to drill students on, so effective teaching of 7th-grade science would cover most if not all of the subject matter spanned by those questions. The teacher would be free to cover it however she likes—any sequence, any course structure, any instructional materials. If the state or school system or charter school wants to systematize this (and assist its teachers) by setting forth a scope and

sequence, textbooks, units, midcourse assessments, and such, that’s fine, too.

Obviously, the testing body needs to ensure that there’s a logical, sequential relationship between the 7th-grade science questions and the 8th-grade questions and so forth. Indeed, the questions would surely overlap in part—and would cumulate, over the 13 grades, to a solid science education.

That’s pretty much the way the best extant national curriculum works, at least through grade 8. Of course I’m thinking of the Core Knowledge Curriculum developed by University of Virginia professor and *Cultural Literacy* author E. D. Hirsch. (Alas, it doesn’t yet include the high school grades.) Hirsch says it’s supposed to occupy roughly half of the school day. That feels about right to me. Maybe even two-thirds.

The national curriculum would cover only content, not pedagogy or instruction. For that we depend on professionals, and we assume and expect that they will differ from one another in their skills, enthusiasms, preferences, and values. One school might rely heavily on “virtual” instruction, for example, making extensive use of Internet offerings and opportunities. Others may team teach several subjects via two or three teachers who like working together and whose subjects lend themselves to blending. Still others will resemble the traditional self-contained-classroom schools of yesteryear. This is as it should be. The United States has some 54 million schoolkids, 3 million teachers, and 100,000 schools. They differ in many ways and ought to. But today the absence of a common core is a critical handicap, particularly for the neediest kids, weakest teachers, and least advantaged schools. Equity demands that we rectify this.

Most successful modern nations have something akin to a national curriculum, whether explicitly or through their exam systems. Japan has “national curriculum standards” and insists that individual schools use them as the basis for planning what they will actually teach and how they teach it. Singapore publishes syllabi for each major course or subject, usually divided

between primary and secondary. England spells it all out in considerable detail, and France famously standardizes even its lesson plans. To my knowledge, no two nations do this in quite the same way—and some of the other “federal” countries, such as Australia and Canada, are still working on how to do it at all. In Canada, for example, several provincial education ministries have voluntarily joined together to develop “pan-Canadian” curricula, starting with science.

Rather than starting with a federal mandate, a consortium of states and private organizations (such as some combination of Achieve, the state school “chiefs,” and the governors) could develop the curricula and tests, ideally with initial support from major national foundations. States would then be free to join if they like. Possibly we’ll wind up with more than one consortium, and states would have choices among them. Picture the Southern Regional Education Board spearheading the second of these. Maybe the four small New England states that have already joined forces on testing will become the starting point for a third. (The Brits do something like this with their multiple testing bodies.) Uncle Sam’s role is to encourage movement in this direction, probably by giving states that join such consortia some breaks on No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its successors, perhaps a bit more money, perhaps automatic approval of their standards and tests without further inspection or negotiation.

I don’t expect every state will join, at least not soon, so the federal government’s additional responsibility is to maintain NAEP as the external auditor of all states. We’ll find out over time whether kids in schools and states that join in the common curricula and exams do better (or worse) than in those that maintain their curricular independence.

Deborah Meier: I have five concerns with Chester Finn’s proposal for a national curriculum.

First, what’s (positively) special about the U.S.A. is that it doesn’t have an official line, above all, on ideological and intellectual

matters. This is part of our unusual history and reflects tolerance for diverse origins and beliefs. It has always been a struggle, never quite won, but it is a strength that is always tempting for us to abandon. Doing so would be at a cost we would someday rue.

Second, there is no way in which a federally approved curriculum can avoid the trap of selection bias—no matter who might design it. Even if I were to design my ideal history curriculum, whatever I decided to spend more time on or (God forbid) omit altogether will be influenced by my biases. The sources I require my students to be familiar with; the differences of opinion I tolerate versus those I feel compelled to correct; how I “simplify” without losing the most important truths—all these are fraught with inevitable biases. What I believe everyone must know may be different from what you believe. Do we vote on “the truth” and then put a camera in each classroom to ensure it’s carried out?

I truly cannot imagine how supporters of a federally approved curriculum solve these issues. It’s not merely political bias, mind you, but academic and intellectual views that may or may not have political implications. Historians at my graduate school differed on whether history was a science or a field of humanities, for example. So they offered both! Not an insignificant difference of opinion. Biologists and physicists may have different views about which science is more critical, and within each field there are controversies about the nature of science and which scientific ideas are more important.

A panel of righteous and well-educated people is not an answer. So, you might ask, are multiple bodies of righteous and well-educated people any better? Yes, because it leaves the door open for more controversy; offers escape hatches for unexpected views; and leaves contenders, alternatives, and authority in many hands.

Third, attempting to avoid bias by including everyone’s biases only generates more problems. Precisely in order to avoid charges of bias, the tendency of textbooks

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—DM

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the curriculum, and
the scoring guide
for the test becomes
the bible.*

—DM

*The most highly
respected high
school courses in
America today
are Advanced
Placement (AP) and
IB courses, which
have quite a lot
of nationwide
prescription as to
their content.*

—CF

(and curricula and tests) is already to include snippets of all viewpoints, thus becoming long-winded and boring. The effort of the national science community a decade or so ago to outline what every 18-year-old should know about science was so extensive that it invited either rote memorization (in defiance of the heart of science instruction being recommended) or studying nothing but science in order to cover it all. The science teachers at my old high school admitted that they were only secure in their knowledge of one or at most two of the fields covered. What part of the fascinating study of mathematics is a “must” for 18-year-olds? What knowledge of music or art?

The focus on testing also has an interesting side effect: it makes it hard for wise educators to take advantage of the teachable moment in their concern to stick with the stuff that will appear on the test. For example, teachers should be able to use the recent election as a moment for understanding our political system or the financial crisis to examine how money and finance works.

My fourth problem is that any curriculum leads—as Finn acknowledges—to assessment issues. My colleague Diane Ravitch suggests we decouple the two ideas. I think, as Finn does, that the one inevitably follows the other. At that point the best intentions of a good curriculum come screeching to a halt. In reality, the test becomes the curriculum, and the scoring guide for the test becomes the bible.

Of course, we can do our best to develop tests that are more nuanced, that require strong written and oral exposition, opportunities to defend one’s ideas, to think critically and persuasively, etc. But it’s highly unlikely, almost utopian, to imagine we could do it on a national scale, and far more likely are precisely the kinds of assessment tools that undermine a strong education.

But my greatest concern is none of the above!

I’m concerned that all of this is a way to avoid a real conversation about the purposes of public education and then to acknowledge our ignorance about “ensuring” success. Our own children are worth

more than money can buy, but no parent can offer a guarantee.

Whether the first discussion might ever lead to a substantial consensus I don’t know. What math must we “all” know, and why? Like music, mathematics is a subject of beauty, as well as a practical study of import. But which aspects of math must we all—as citizens—have at our fingertips regardless of our vocational goals? In this debate not only experts in math must have a voice.

So, too, with debating what literature is indispensable. How tempting it is to add a little bit of everything to please all camps rather than engaging with a few works in great depth. The development of a “taste” for literature—fiction and nonfiction alike—is hardly something we’re good at teaching. Not to mention the dilemma about how to teach literacy of the new media that will constitute the bulk of the next generation’s “reading.”

Perhaps we can reach agreement that one purpose stands apart from the rest—that the indispensable core purpose of a public education system is that it prepares people for public life in a democracy, with all that this implies. But even that would be far from settling matters. How we define democracy, and what constitutes the intellectual underpinnings of a democracy are open to endless discourse. But it’s the “litmus” test.

I also know that the second question—how to make it work—is equally knotty and that no one has a monopoly on the right answers.

EN: What should be taught, in your view, and how will educators figure out effective ways to do this?

CF: If I were king, I’d probably install Core Knowledge in the primary and middle grades and the International Baccalaureate (IB) in high schools. I don’t think it’s any coincidence that the most highly respected high school courses in America today are Advanced Placement (AP) and IB courses, which have quite a lot of nationwide prescription as to their content. (It’s true that AP shuns a prescribed “syllabus,” but veteran AP teachers are clear as to what they must

cover in order to prepare their pupils for those exams—and the College Board isn't shy about clueing in new teachers.)

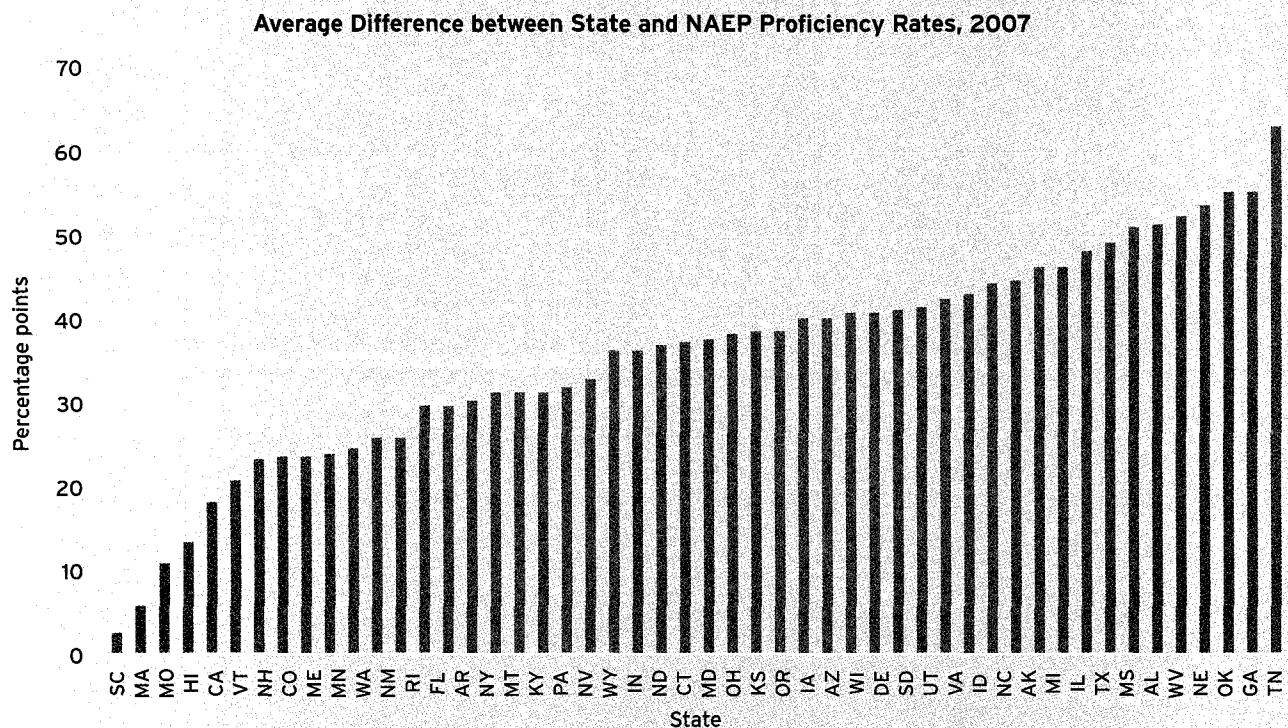
With these standards and assessments in place, the question reasonably arises, where do educators find the curricular materials that best help them tackle the standards? Some will develop their own or pull them off the Internet. I think we can be confident that major publishing companies will develop and market commercial versions. I'd favor staging a competition among prospective curriculum suppliers, maybe have a jury evaluate and grade their products. Perhaps then we could make all their products available to states, districts, and

schools, and let the market select among them. Wikipedia-style (or Zagat-style) open-source rating systems will enable product users to rate and comment on what works best in what circumstances. Having a national curriculum doesn't mean we need confine ourselves to just one option.

Textbook publishers (and their modern-day successors, such as virtual-curriculum developers) will align their products with the national standards rather than with the whims of California and Texas. (That assumes California and Texas join the multistate ventures, of course.) The total amount of testing should diminish and, if it doesn't, it will have to be better

All Over the Map (Figure 1)

Standards for proficiency in Massachusetts and South Carolina are nearly as rigorous as those established for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), while Tennessee and Georgia, for example, set the bar much lower for their students.



Note: The chart shows the difference between the percentage of students (4th and 8th grade) deemed proficient on the 2007 state tests (math and reading) and the percentage of students in those grades deemed proficient on the 2007 NAEP tests. The closer the value is to 0, the more similar were the results on the two sets of tests and the more rigorous the state's standards.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics; Individual state web sites and departments of education

*Five “habits of mind”
underlay all the
academic disciplines:*

- (1) How do you know
what you know?*
 - (2) Are there other
perspectives?*
 - (3) Are there patterns
there?*
 - (4) Could it be
otherwise?*
 - (5) Why does it
matter?*
- DM

*I’m unimpressed
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It’s the absence of
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disagreement.*

—CF

aligned to the end-of-course expectations and exams that states will administer. Commercial tests such as the Stanford and Iowa may evolve into something more like formative assessments meant to assist teachers rather than be used for external accountability.

Teacher preparers and professional developers, and those who try to set standards for them (e.g., National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards), will need to take seriously the obligation to align their expectations for instructors with the common expectations for students. All this is mostly good—and, yes, a little bit risky, if the national standards go squishy or the national curriculum falls into the hands of zealots. That’s why it needs to stay voluntary, so any jurisdiction that can’t abide it need not stick with it.

A big grown-up country in the 21st century needs common (and ambitious!) curricular standards for all its children, at least in core subjects, and it needs common assessments, too. If we’ve learned anything from the NCLB experience (and its antecedent “Goals 2000” and “Improving America’s Schools” legislation), it’s that having these things vary from state to state produces mediocrity, cacophony, waste, duplication, and confusion (see Figure 1). Survey after survey makes clear that (if the question is asked correctly) parents favor national standards and tests. Instead of letting “That’s the first step toward a national curriculum” serve as a conversation stopper, let’s deploy it as a conversation starter. Let’s acknowledge that “curriculum,” loosely defined, is *supposed* to be aligned with standards and appraised by assessments.

Let me note, finally, that I’m unimpressed by Meier’s “habits of mind” alternative to content (see below). It’s wonderfully seductive, but the serious psychologists with whose work I’m acquainted (see, for example, “Reframing the Mind,” *check the facts*, Summer 2004) don’t put much stock in this Howard Gardner-originated proposition that youngsters can learn skills devoid of content. It’s the absence of essential core content from her view of schooling that lies at the heart of our curricular disagreement.

**EN: What other options are there
for bringing our nation’s public
education system to a higher
level?**

DM: At the schools I led for nearly 40 years, as part of the work of the Coalition of Essential Schools, we spent a lot of time exploring the “why” questions and developing an approach that was aimed at answering them. This discussion was at the heart of the school’s existence and included all parties to it. Like Coalition founder Ted Sizer, we figured if we could grab hold of that, we’d see how much else we could teach and, more importantly, how everything we taught and did helped to reinforce “the essentials,” influencing not only our students’ hours in school (or doing homework), but every waking hour of their lives. We even saw misbehavior as an opening, an opportunity to teach such habits and not an obstacle to it.

We boiled it down to five “habits of mind” that we claimed (somewhat pompously) underlay all the academic disciplines as well as the mental and social disciplines needed for living in a complex modern society: (1) How do you know what you know? What’s the nature of your evidence? How credible is it? Compared to what? (2) Are there other perspectives? What affects our points of view? How otherwise might this be seen? (3) Are there patterns there? A sequence? A theory of cause and effect? (4) Could it be otherwise? What would happen if? Supposing that x had not happened? and (5) Who cares? Why does it matter? As you can see, they blend into each other and, in a way, just define a mind state of skepticism and informed empathy. It suggests having to take seriously the idea that one might be wrong, and so could others. We added “habits of work” like meeting deadlines and being on time and “habits of the heart” like caring about one’s impact on others.

We developed rubrics that spelled out specific formats in which students could demonstrate their proficiency in each discipline. The diploma from our high school rested on convincing an internal and external evaluation committee that the student met the standards set by the faculty. Students’

oral presentations and defenses were based on written essays and other performances in each of the major disciplines as well as subjects of the student's and faculty's choice.

Could the five habits of mind become a national curriculum? Democratic habits of the sort we laid out at Central Park East can be taught in the process of learning math with its powerful logical habits, its attentiveness to patterns, as well as its multiple approaches to getting "right answers." They can be taught in science, with its scrupulous attention to detail, specificity, and evidence, not to mention its humility in the face of the unknown. They can be taught in literature through our capacity to empathize with otherwise unacceptable protagonists, connecting us to people and worlds we otherwise would or could never choose. They can be taught in the way one handles discipline!

Isn't democratic culture best served if all citizens are accustomed to such habitual

ways of thinking, not just knowing how to do various things? I know how to do a lot of things—like putting my keys in the right compartment in my purse—that I don't practice, especially in times of stress. What would it mean to teach so well that we'd hang on to such "habits of mind" in times of stress? Are our five a fair representation of what democratic intellectual habits amount to? Fair questions.

A school community that holds itself to high standards must risk such everlasting debate among, at the very least, the adults in charge and ideally all members of the community. But nothing I've said works if it's simply adopted to try to "cover" the likely contents of a test with which ordinary teachers, families, and students cannot argue or differ. The habit of mind of "supposing that" is best learned from adults who are in a position to choose, revise, and rethink their own viewpoints in the presence of the young. ■

Isn't democratic culture best served if all citizens are accustomed to such habitual ways of thinking, not just knowing how to do various things?
—DM

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School Choice International

Rajashri Chakrabarti and Paul E. Peterson, eds.
MIT Press, 2008

Public-private partnerships in education policy play an important role in enhancing the supply as well as the quality of human capital. In recent years, there has been a burgeoning of public-private partnerships in different parts of the world. The essays in this volume study public-private partnerships in different parts of the world, such as the Americas, Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.



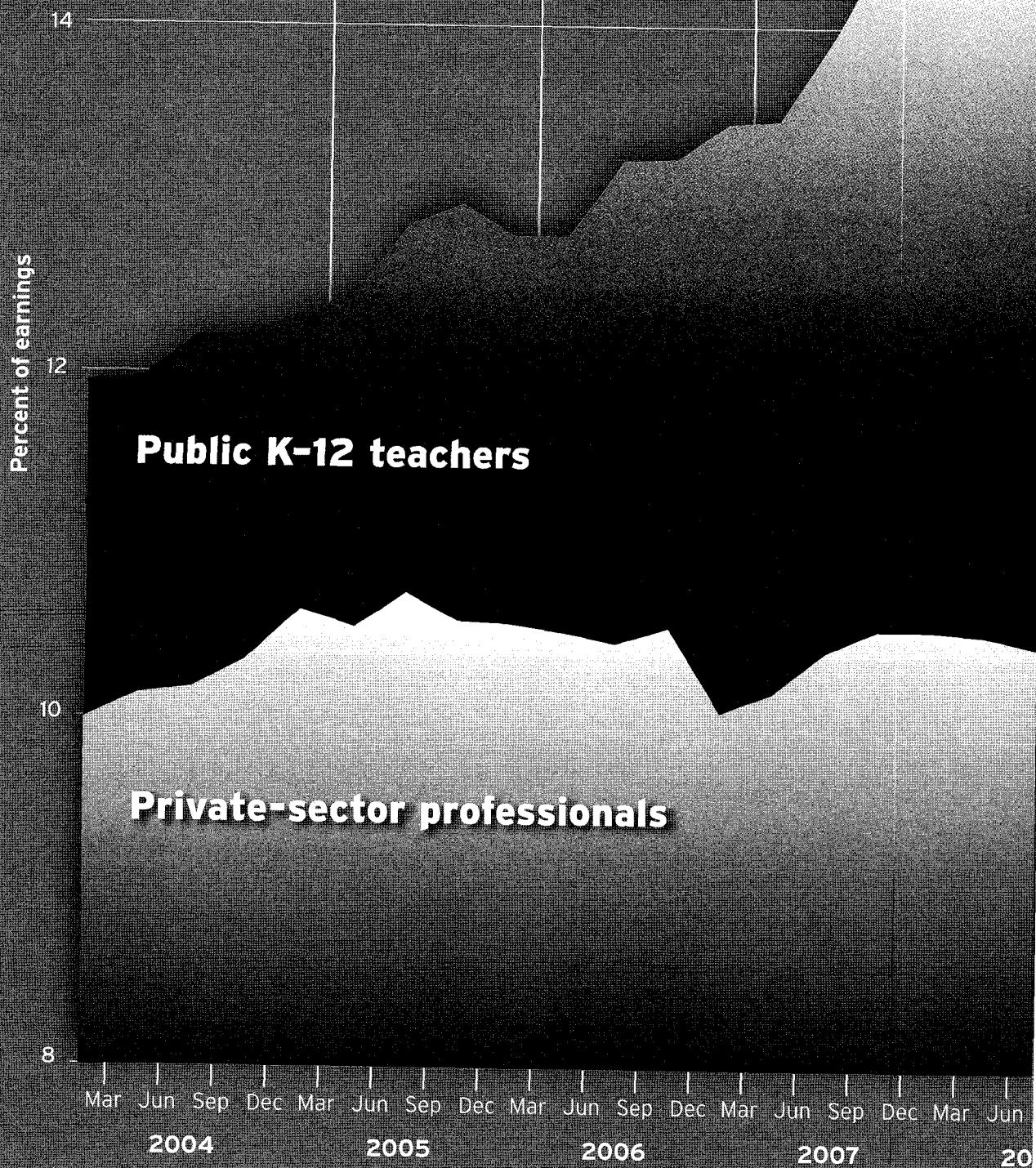
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Higher and Rising (Figure 1)

Employer contributions to public school teacher pensions and Social Security are higher than contributions for private-sector professionals, the gap more than doubling between 2004 and 2008.



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey

Teacher Retirement Benefits

By ROBERT M. COSTRELL and MICHAEL PODGURSKY

The ongoing global financial crisis is forcing many employers, from General Motors to local general stores, to take a hard look at the costs of the compensation packages they offer employees. For public school systems, this will entail a consideration of fringe benefit costs, which in recent years have become an increasingly important component of teacher compensation. During the 2005–06 school year, the most recent year for which U.S. Department of Education data are available, the nation's public schools spent \$187 billion in salaries and \$59 billion in benefits for instructional personnel. Total benefits added about 32 percent to salaries, up from 25 percent in 1999–2000. The increase reflects the well-known rise in health insurance costs, but it also appears to include growing costs of retirement benefits, which have received much less attention.

Conventional wisdom holds that teacher pensions (along with other public pensions) are more costly than private retirement benefits, for reasons dating to an earlier era of

Even in economically tough times, costs are higher than ever

low teacher salaries over lifelong careers. In spite of dissent from this view by some researchers (see sidebar), in this case we find that conventional wisdom is right: the cost of retirement benefits for teachers is higher than for private-sector professionals.

To track changes in retirement costs and compare employer contributions to retirement for public school teachers with those for private-sector professionals, we draw on recent data from a major employer survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor. These data show that the rate of employer contributions to retirement benefits for public school teachers in 2008 is substantially higher than for private professionals: 14.6 percent of earnings for teachers vs. 10.4 percent for private professionals. Moreover, the gap has widened over the four years the data have been available. Between March 2004 and

Wrong Data, Wrong Conclusion

Our findings are at odds with the claim made by Lawrence Mishel and Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute in the June 2007 *Phi Delta Kappan* that employer contributions for retiree benefits for teachers are no higher than for professionals in the private sector. Their claim was also based on National Compensation Survey (NCS) data. The unabridged version of this paper (available at www.educationnext.org) provides a detailed critique of their methodology. The three main problems with their calculations are summarized below.

Inappropriate Occupational Categories

The policy debate is about public school teachers, yet Mishel and Rothstein combine public and private school teachers in their analysis. In addition, the "professionals" to whom these teachers are compared also include all teachers; indeed, they are one of the largest components of this group. The authors mislabel the group in their article as "all other professionals," but the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) table from which their data are drawn clearly shows it to be an occupational grouping that includes teachers. Finally, while Mishel and Rothstein state that the appropriate comparison is with private-sector professionals, this group includes all state and local government professionals, too.

The same BLS report provides separate tables with data for the two appropriate occupational groups: public school K-12 teachers and private-sector "management, professional, and related" workers. These are the tables we use in our analysis.

Confounding Social Security Contributions

Mishel and Rothstein are unable to isolate Social Security contributions with the table they use. In that table, Social Security contributions are subsumed into a larger category that also includes Medicare, worker's compensation, and federal and state unemployment insurance. This problem does not exist when using the proper table for private-sector professionals, as Social Security contributions are separated out. The table with data for public school teachers does not separate out Social Security, but those contributions can be estimated using the NCS estimate for Social Security coverage, as explained in the text.

Share of Total Compensation vs. Percentage of Earnings

Mishel and Rothstein measure employer contributions as a share of total compensation instead of as a percentage of earnings. Shares of total compensation are not informative about how remuner-

ative one occupation is compared to another. To take a simple example, suppose two occupations, one of them teachers, have identical earnings and retirement benefits, but differ in health insurance benefits. Since employer contributions to health insurance are markedly higher for teachers, the share of compensation for that component will be higher and the share for retirement will be lower, since all shares must sum to 100 percent. This fact alone mathematically reduces the share of total compensation that goes to retirement for public teachers, relative to private professionals.

Summing Up

Mishel and Rothstein find that employer costs for retirement constituted 11.5 percent of total compensation for "teachers" and for "other professionals" in June 2006. Correcting the three problems identified above, we find that employer contributions for retirement were 12.8 percent of earnings for public school teachers and 10.5 percent for private professionals in June 2006, a gap of about one-fifth. Since that time, as shown in Figure 1, contributions for private professionals have remained flat, while contributions for teachers have risen, doubling the gap between the two by September 2008.

September 2008, the difference more than doubled, rising from 1.9 to 4.2 percentage points (see Figure 1).

There are several reasons one might expect employer contributions to retirement to be higher for teachers. First, nearly all teachers are covered by traditional defined benefit (DB) pension plans, in which employees receive a regular retirement check based on a legislatively determined formula. These plans have, over the years, come to offer retirement at relatively young ages, at a rate that replaces a substantial portion of final

salary. U.S. Department of Education data show a median retirement age for public school teachers of 58 years, compared to about 62 for the labor force as a whole. A teacher in her mid-50s who has worked for 30 years under a typical teacher pension plan will be entitled to an annuity at retirement of between 60 and 75 percent of her final salary. In nearly all plans this annuity has some sort of cost-of-living adjustment. One does not generally observe comparable retirement plans for professionals and lower-tier managers in the private sector,

since most employers have replaced traditional DB plans with defined contribution (DC) or similar 401(k)-type plans, in which the employer and employee contribute to a retirement account that belongs to the employee. Nor do those traditional DB plans that remain typically reward retirement at such early ages; they more nearly resemble Social Security, where eligibility is age 62 for early retirement, and 66 and rising for normal retirement.

The Survey Data

Our analysis draws on data from the National Compensation Survey (NCS), an employer survey developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The NCS survey is designed to measure employer costs for wages and salaries and fringe benefits across a wide range of occupations and industries in the public and private sectors. Although the BLS has been reporting quarterly fringe-benefit cost data for various public and private employee groups for more than a decade, only since March 2004 has the bureau broken out these fringe-benefit cost data for public school K–12 teachers. In this article we use those data to compare retirement benefit costs for public K–12 teachers with costs for private-sector professionals. We use the most detailed available private-sector comparison group, “management, professional, and related,” a category that includes business and financial managers, operations specialists, accountants and auditors, computer programmers and analysts, engineers, lawyers, physicians, and nurses.

health insurance), if salaries change, the dollar costs for retirement benefits move proportionally. On the benefit side, the DB formula ties one’s starting annuity to final average salary, while the adequacy of a DC plan is commonly thought of in terms of the salary replacement rate. Thus it is natural to specify retirement costs as a percentage of salary, both for teachers and for private-sector professionals.

In making this comparison, we must account for the fact that, while all of the private-sector professionals are covered by Social Security, a number of public school teachers are not. Some of the higher cost of employer retirement plans for teachers is offset by lower employer contributions for Social Security benefits. Thus, we should compare the contribution rates for employer-provided retirement benefits *and* Social Security for both groups of workers. While the BLS reports the Social Security contribution rate for private professionals, it does not report a similar rate for teachers. However, we are able to make such an adjustment by multiplying the share of teachers covered by Social Security, which the BLS estimates to be 73 percent, times the employer contribution rate (6.2 percent). This assumes that the vast majority of teachers are below the Social Security earnings cap (currently \$102,000) and that the share of teachers in Social Security has been steady over the four years for which we make the comparison.

A time series with quarterly data for these benefit percentages is reported in Figure 1. Two patterns are visible. First, the contribution rate is considerably higher for public school teachers than for private professionals. In the most recent quarter for

Retiree health-insurance benefits are not included in the BLS employment cost estimates. Since private employers have largely eliminated this benefit, this means that our estimate of the gap in retirement benefits favoring public school teachers is low.

We measure the cost of retirement benefits as a percentage of earnings. Virtually all states specify in law that the employer will contribute a certain percentage of teacher salaries to a DB pension fund (employee contributions are similarly specified), and it is commonplace to compare such contribution rates among the states. Similarly, private-sector employers offering DC plans will typically specify their contribution as a percentage of salary (often as a match to employee contributions). Unlike some other benefits (e.g.,

which data are reported, ending September 2008, the employer contribution rate for public K–12 teachers (14.6 percent) was 4.2 points higher than that for private-sector professionals (10.4 percent). Second, the gap is widening. While the private-sector contribution rate has been relatively flat over the four years, the rate for public school teachers has markedly increased, doubling the gap between them from one-fifth to two-fifths.

In one important respect, it is likely that the BLS data underestimate the cost of retirement benefits for public

school teachers. Many public school districts (and some states) provide health insurance benefits for retired public school teachers. In the course of this research we were surprised to learn that retiree health-insurance benefits are *not* included in the BLS employment cost estimates. Since private employers have largely eliminated this benefit, this means that our estimate of the gap in retirement benefits favoring public school teachers is low, although we cannot be sure of the extent of the underestimate.

Social Security and Teachers

While the overall employer contribution rate for public school teachers is higher than for private-sector professionals, the group average may mask differences between teachers who are and are not covered by Social Security. In order to assess this point empirically, we examined directly the data on employer contributions for teacher pension funds. We find that total employer contributions for both groups of public school teachers are higher than for private-sector professionals.

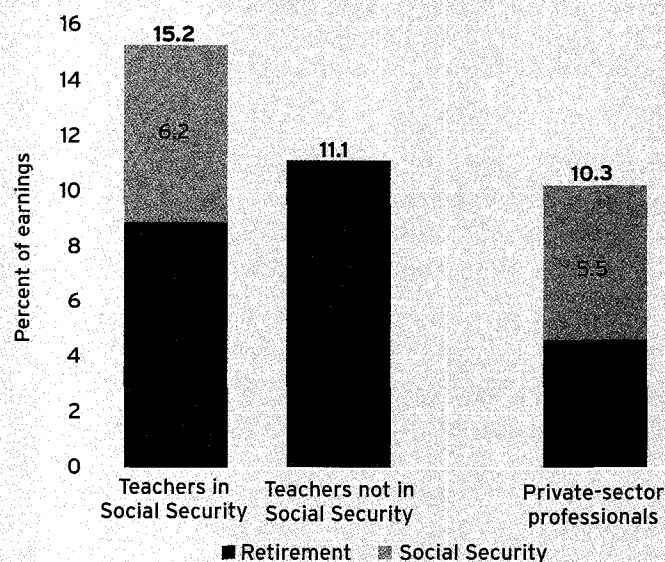
Most teachers are in statewide pension funds, with a relatively small number in district funds (e.g., New York City, Denver, St. Louis). Data on employer contributions for these plans are available in annual financial reports for each fund, which are surveyed by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA).

Using data on contributions from NASRA and pension fund annual reports where necessary, and using weights based on the number of teachers employed in each state or district as reported in the NCES Common Core of Data, it is possible to compute average employer contribution rates for teachers. First we consider teachers who are in states and districts covered by Social Security. For these teachers, we calculate the weighted average employer contribution to be 9 percent of earnings. This can be compared to the estimate of employer contributions to retirement for private-sector professionals and managers, calculated from the BLS data as 4.7 percent for the comparable period (FY07). This is a 4.3 percent difference favoring public school teachers, almost double, in those states and districts where teachers are enrolled in Social Security, so the comparison is on an equal footing.

For states and districts where teachers are *not* in Social Security, we calculate the average employer contribution at 11.1 percent of earnings. Of course, this is considerably higher than the 4.7 percent retirement contributions for private-sector professionals, but, perhaps surprisingly, it even exceeds their employers' *combined* contributions to retirement and Social Security, which averaged 10.3 percent for FY07. Thus, as Figure 2 shows, comparing teachers with professionals in private-sector employment, total

Clear Winners (Figure 2)

Total retirement contributions in 2007 were highest where teachers are covered by Social Security.



SOURCES: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data; National Association of State Retirement Administrators; pension fund annual reports; Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey

employer contributions are higher for teachers whether or not they are also covered by Social Security.

Our analysis of evidence from the BLS National Compensation Survey and the NASRA Public Fund Survey shows that the employer contribution rates for public school teachers are a larger percentage of earnings than for private-sector professionals and managers, whether or not we take account of teacher coverage under Social Security. In addition, the BLS data show that the contribution rate for teachers is clearly trending upward.

Looking Ahead

What are the likely trends going forward for the cost of teacher retirement benefits? No one knows for sure, but we can identify the two key factors that will drive these costs: future developments in the benefits themselves and in their funding. The trend through much of the postwar period was to enhance the retirement formulas in various ways, including reducing the age or service requirement for full benefits. For example, just last year New York City agreed to enhance its pension formula for younger teachers. But there is evidence that benefit enhancement has generally abated in recent years. There are even a few states, including Texas, that have moved to reduce benefits for

newly hired teachers. However, this is unlikely to reduce costs in the near future, since benefits for incumbent teachers are protected by law in most states.

The other factor to consider is the funding status of teacher pension plans. The vast majority of teacher pension plans are not fully funded. This means that contributions include both the "normal cost" of pension liabilities accruing to current employees and the legacy costs of amortizing unfunded liabilities accrued previously (due to a variety of reasons, including the original pay-as-you go nature of most plans, as well as unfunded benefit enhancements over the years). In theory, if the actuarial assumptions hold true going forward and no new benefits are enacted, the amortization costs will eventually disappear (after 30 years, under a typical funding schedule), in much the same way that a homeowner's monthly expenses decline when the mortgage gets paid off.

However, the near-term prospects may be very different. For one thing, public pension funds face the possibility of important accounting changes. Unlike private pension funds, public fund actuaries have been allowed to discount future liabilities at a rate of about 8 percent, the assumed long-run market return on fund assets. Finance economists have argued that such a high discount rate is imprudent, however, and there

have been signs that public accounting standards might move toward the private-sector rules, based on corporate bond and Treasury rates, which could reduce the discount rate to about 5 percent. This would dramatically raise the required amortization payments.

Finally, it bears noting that the market value of pension funds has fallen precipitously as of this writing (December 2008). Barring a major market recovery, pension funds across the country will have new, large unfunded liabilities. Under actuarial smoothing methods, these losses will be phased in, raising required amortization payments over the next few years. If the accounting rules for public funds also change, reducing the discount rate on liabilities, the employers of public school teachers, along with other public employers, will face a double hit, requiring sharp increases in contributions. By contrast, those private employers who have switched over to defined contribution plans in recent decades will be unaffected. In short, there are good reasons to believe that the contribution gap we have documented will continue to widen in coming years.

Robert M. Costrell is professor of education reform and economics at the University of Arkansas. Michael Podgursky is professor of economics at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

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For-Profit and Nonprofit Management in Philadelphia Schools

By PAUL E. PETERSON and MATTHEW M. CHINGOS

The federal law No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires states to “restructure” any school that fails for six years running to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward full proficiency on the part of all students by the year 2014. The law provides a number of restructuring options, including turning over the school’s management to a private for-profit or nonprofit entity. Only a few school districts nationwide have sought help

from either type of organization in the management of low-performing schools. But in 2002 the School District of Philadelphia, at the request of the state of Pennsylvania, asked entities of both types to participate in a substantial restructuring of many of its lowest-performing schools. The restructuring initiative was directed by the Philadelphia School Reform Commission (SRC), which contracted with for-profit organizations to manage 30 elementary and middle schools and with nonprofit organizations to manage 16 schools.

The policy intervention in Philadelphia raises questions of general interest: Do students at schools assigned to for-profit or nonprofit managers learn more than would be expected had those schools remained under

school district management? Is for-profit management more or less effective at raising achievement than nonprofit management?

Told most simply, the Philadelphia story provides a threefold answer to these questions: 1) for-profits outperform district-managed schools in math but not in reading; 2) nonprofits probably fall short of district schools in both reading and math instruction; and 3) for-profits outperform nonprofits in both subjects. However, the answers require both explication and qualification.

The Theoretical Debate

The distinction between for-profit and nonprofit management has been a topic of continuing discussion in the scholarly literature on school reform.

What kind of management does better than the district-run schools?

Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman theorized that for-profit firms are more effective because they have clear economic incentives to lift student performance. The firm can build its reputation (and in the long run generate a profit) only if it becomes known for running effective schools. Others have suggested, however, that for-profit firms are likely to cut costs and thereby shortchange students in order to benefit the firm's owners and shareholders. The debate over nonprofit organizations takes a different form. Some have argued that nonprofit managers are likely to be effective because they have close ties to the

As the turmoil was reaching its climax, Governor Ridge resigned from office to become the nation's secretary of homeland security, and Pennsylvania's lieutenant governor, Mark Schweiker, became governor. Upon assuming office, Schweiker said he would not serve beyond the current term, ending in 2002, a decision that weakened his leverage vis-à-vis the Philadelphia school district.

The stage was set for a compromise that would save face for all the parties involved. It was agreed that the school board should be replaced by a School Reform Commission, three members of which would be appointed by the governor and

Edison was asked to manage 20 schools; another 10 became the responsibility of two other for-profits. Sixteen schools would be managed by 4 nonprofits—the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, Foundations, and Universal.

community in which they are embedded and can enlist the energies of committed entrepreneurs, who devote all available resources to enhance student performance. But others caution that nonprofit managers may not have the experience, resources, or economic incentives necessary for building quality educational institutions.

The Intervention

Only after an intense political struggle did the Philadelphia school district ask for-profit and nonprofit managers to assume responsibility for a number of its schools. In 2001 Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge, a Republican and school voucher supporter, indicated he would not support any increase in funding for the Philadelphia school district until an independent entity had assessed its financial practices and educational effectiveness. Philadelphia's mayor at the time, Democrat John Street, knowing the district was facing a \$215 million deficit, agreed to the study, and the state department of education asked Edison Schools to carry it out. Edison, a for-profit firm that manages charters and other schools under contracts with school districts, reported that the Philadelphia school district had spent \$10 billion over a decade without being held accountable for the results. Governor Ridge refused to distribute any more state aid beyond current levels unless the school district agreed to a new partnership with the state.

When the local press reported that Edison was expected to assume management of many of the city's schools, the local teachers union mobilized in opposition, and groups of parent and student activists held rallies throughout the city.

two by the mayor. The SRC decided that only a limited number of the lowest-performing schools in the district would be turned over to private management. Edison Schools was not to be the only private provider. Instead, seven entities—three for-profit and four nonprofit—were chosen. The SRC explained its decision by saying that multiple providers would yield information on the kind of management that was most effective. The SRC asked Edison Schools to manage 20 of the schools; another 5 each would become the responsibility of two other for-profit companies, Victory Schools and Chancellor Beacon Academies. Sixteen of the low-performing schools would be managed by nonprofit entities—the University of Pennsylvania (3 schools), Temple University (5 schools), Foundations (5 schools), and Universal (3 schools). The SRC also appointed a reform-minded superintendent, the energetic and outspoken Paul Vallas, who had instituted a series of reforms in Chicago at the behest of Mayor Richard Daley.

The for-profit firms were more experienced in running schools but they had fewer local political connections than did the nonprofit entities, as none had operated programs within the city itself. Though Edison was held in high regard by the Republican state secretary of education, it faced strong opposition within Philadelphia, especially from the local teachers union. Edison Schools could claim considerable experience at running schools, however, as it was the manager of 100 district and charter schools nationwide. Victory Schools, a company that offered single-sex education within classrooms, was the manager of schools in New York state and Baltimore, Maryland. To strengthen its local connections, Victory hired a former district employee to head up its Philadelphia effort. Chancellor Beacon operated some 80 private and charter schools,

feature
PHILADELPHIA PETERSON & CHINGOS

but it had not previously managed schools under contract with a school district. Shortly after the intervention began, Superintendent Vallas canceled the district's contract with Chancellor Beacon, and its five schools were either brought back under district control or assigned to other providers.

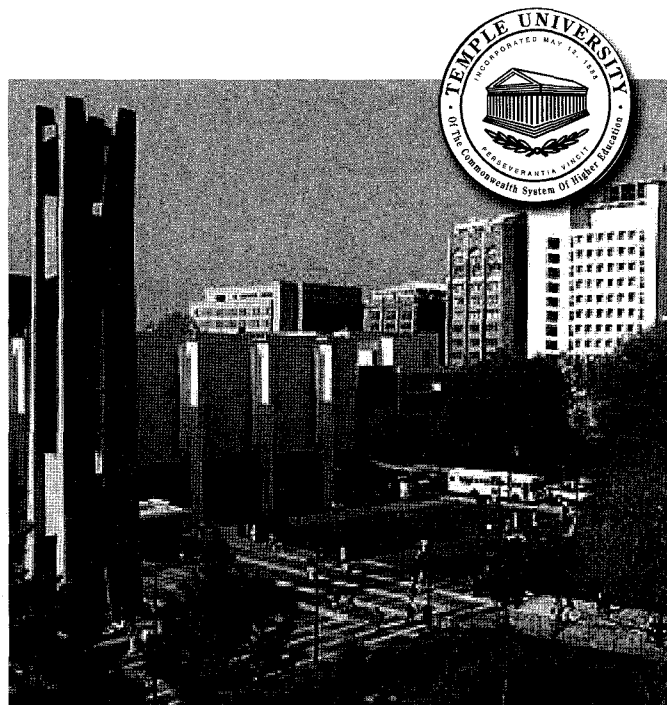
By contrast, the nonprofit entities were—and have remained—politically well-connected institutions. The University of Pennsylvania is a Philadelphia icon, a highly prestigious Ivy League institution with a history dating back to Benjamin Franklin. Temple University's status is less exalted, but it is nonetheless an established Philadelphia institution of higher learning. Foundations was created by one of the school district's former associate superintendents and is staffed by many former district employees. Foundations also had close ties to a politically influential state representative active in community development programs. Universal, a community development corporation founded by Kenny Gamble, an immensely successful writer of soul music, has strong ties to Islamic leaders within Philadelphia's black community.

Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania drew on the resources of their schools of education. Rather than taking on a general reorganization of the schools, they focused mainly on providing professional development to teachers, formal and informal assessment feedback to teachers, and within-classroom coaching services to students. Foundations operated afterschool programs and favored a teaching approach that relied on computer-based learning in which students progress at their own pace. Universal was known for boosting economic development and providing social services, but it had only limited experience managing schools.

The school district restricted the prerogatives of both for-profit and nonprofit managers in a number of ways. Management had to operate within the framework of the district's collective bargaining agreements with its union employees, and teachers were allowed to transfer to other schools within the district if they wished. Many teachers chose to transfer, as could be expected given the fact that the schools in which they had been teaching were considered most in need of new management. The district also retained control over many aspects of school management, including the school calendar and the code of conduct for teachers and students.

All of that happened in 2002. Then over the following six years, several leadership changes occurred. Sandra Dungee Glenn was appointed by Democratic governor Edward Rendell (who had succeeded Schweiker) as the SRC's new chair. Glenn was a former community organizer and active in Democratic politics. Superintendent Paul Vallas left for New Orleans, where he took on the daunting task of rebuilding the city's post-Katrina school system. And Arlene Ackerman, who had previously served as superintendent in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., was hired by the SRC as the new superintendent.

Under its new leadership, the SRC removed five schools from the management of the for-profit firms (four from Edison, one from Victory) and one school from the management of a nonprofit entity (Temple). Acting upon the superintendent's recommendation, the SRC decided that the six schools should come under direct district control once again because they had not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as required by No Child Left Behind. "It's been six years—it is time to sort it out," said SRC chair Glenn. Ackerman indicated that many more schools could come back under district control once a full-scale review had been undertaken.



Temple University is an established Philadelphia institution of higher learning.

Factors other than educational considerations may have influenced the selection of schools the district brought back under its control. As noted above, the nonprofit schools were well connected politically, while the for-profit firms were not. But it is also possible that the nonprofits were the more effective educational institutions. To see whether that was the case, we use a rigorous research design to estimate the impact of for-profit and nonprofit management in Philadelphia.

The Data

The Philadelphia school district supplied the information on which we base our analysis. Test-score, demographic, and school enrollment information on Philadelphia students in grades 2 to 8 from 2001 through 2008 are available for each

student. The test-score data come from three different tests. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is the test currently used for holding schools accountable for improved student learning in Philadelphia. But when the private management intervention began in the fall of 2002, that system of measuring school performance was still a work in progress. However, two other tests were given to some Philadelphia students between 2001 and 2006: the Stanford 9 and the TerraNova, both of which are nationally normed. In order to place the information from these tests on a common scale, we followed the standard practice of standardizing all scores by test, grade, and year to have a mean of zero and standard deviation of one.

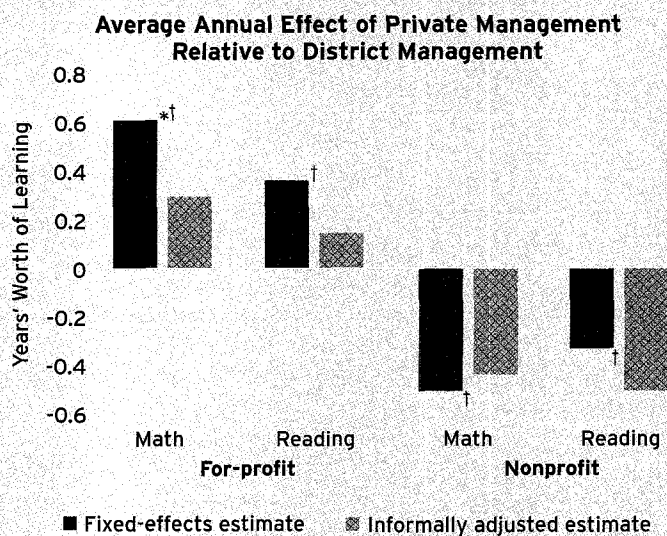
We next classified schools as under for-profit management, under nonprofit management, or under regular district management. The average combined reading and math test scores one year prior to the management change at schools assigned to for-profit and nonprofit entities were 0.39 and 0.13 standard deviations below the Philadelphia average, respectively, while the pre-intervention scores of the full set of 142 regular public schools were 0.19 standard deviations above the district average. Because of that disparity, we limited the schools included in the comparison group to the lower half of all regular district schools. Those 71 schools had prior test scores that were 0.15 standard deviations below the district average, a level of performance much closer to those at the schools placed under new management. Restricting the comparison group in this way allows us to make a cleaner, if not an exact, comparison while maintaining a sufficient number of schools to be able to detect sizable management impacts at conventional levels of statistical significance.

Method

The Philadelphia intervention does not provide the opportunity for a random assignment study of the impact of for-profit and nonprofit management. Schools assigned to intervention status were not chosen randomly, but selected on the grounds that they were in greatest need of intervention. We therefore employed a "difference-in-differences" analysis to estimate the impact of attending a for-profit or nonprofit privately managed school (relative to attending that school had it remained under district management). The treatment groups consist of schools managed by each type of private provider, and the comparison group includes the regular public schools with test

The Almighty Dollar (Figure 1)

Regardless of the method used to make the comparison, students in Philadelphia appear to have learned more in for-profit schools and less in nonprofit schools than in schools that remained under district management.



Notes: The fixed-effects estimate includes the approximately 65,000 students for whom at least 3 test scores are available. The informally adjusted estimate is a less rigorous estimate of impact on the approximately 100,000 students for whom at least two test scores are available.

* Difference between private and district management is statistically significant

† Difference between for-profit and nonprofit management is statistically significant

SOURCE: Authors' analyses

scores below the median for all regular district schools, as discussed above. To identify the effect of treatment, we calculate the difference between average annual test-score gains made by students at treated and comparison schools before and after the intervention began. So, for example, if test-score gains at the schools treated by for-profit management were 20 percent of a standard deviation higher than gains before treatment, while comparably measured gains at the comparison schools were only 15 percent of a standard deviation higher, the estimated effect of for-profit management would be the difference between them, or 5 percent of a standard deviation.

Our use of annual gain scores provides an estimate of treatment effects based on the extent to which students at each school do better or worse than would be expected, given their initial test scores. We also include student fixed effects, which account for changes in the composition of the schools' student populations over time that cannot be explained by the limited set of student characteristics for which information was available in the district's database. Finally, we control for the demographic characteristics of students' peers and whether students have recently moved from one school to another.

The inclusion of student fixed effects means that students are compared only to themselves over time when estimating the effect of each kind of management. Estimates that include student fixed effects require at least three years of scores, which provide two changes in scores from one period to another, typically called gain scores (even though in some cases they are losses, not gains). In our analysis, there are 68,677 students for whom the data allow us to compute at least two gain scores in math (and a similar number for the reading estimation). For another 46,875 students one gain score is available. With one gain score, it is possible to use models that control for observable background characteristics, but those models cannot adjust for unobserved student characteristics (such as parental education or student commitment). We nonetheless use such models to estimate informally the impacts on all students for whom at least one gain

years of schooling, the negative impacts on math performance were, on average, approximately half a year's worth of learning each year, a large effect (see Figure 1). However, the negative impact was statistically significant in only the first year after the intervention began. In reading, the average adverse impact of nonprofit management was roughly 10 percent of a standard deviation annually, about 32 percent of a year's worth of learning. The adverse effect on reading performance was statistically significant in only the first year after the intervention began.

As mentioned earlier, impacts may have been somewhat different for the students with fewer test scores, who could not be included in our preferred model. Adjusting for that possibility yields an adverse impact of nonprofit management of 18 percent of a standard deviation on math performance and 14 percent on reading scores.

In 2008 Philadelphia reassumed control of only one school under nonprofit management while not renewing the contracts for five schools under for-profit management. Our results provide no support for those decisions.

score can be calculated. Those informal estimates require assumptions that are quite restrictive, however, so the best estimates available to us are only for the approximately 68,000 students that could be included in the model that employed a fixed-effects analysis.

Despite the tens of thousands of student observations, those in schools under private management are clustered within only 30 schools managed by for-profit organizations and 16 managed by nonprofit ones. As a result, the annual impacts of the intervention must be as much as 20 to 30 percent of a standard deviation in order to be detected at conventional levels of statistical significance. That substantial an annual impact is seldom detected for large-scale structural interventions in education. For that reason, we also discuss large impacts that fall short of statistical significance when the pattern of results is consistent over the six-year time period.

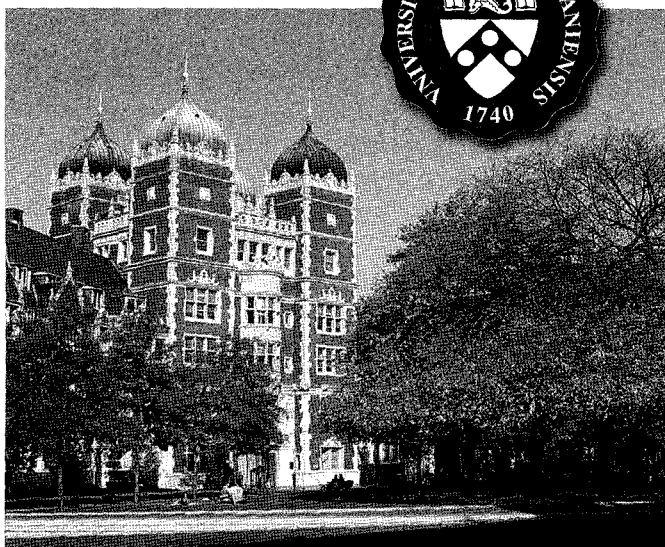
Results

The impact of nonprofit management appears to have been negative. At schools under nonprofit management, students learned, on average for the six years, 21 percent of a standard deviation *less* in math each year than they would have had their school remained under district management. In terms of

The effect of for-profit management was generally positive, although only the math impacts are statistically significant. At schools under for-profit management, students learned on average 25 percent of a standard deviation more in math each year of the six years of the intervention than they would have had the school been under district management. The estimated impact each year was roughly 60 percent of a year's worth of learning, a large, statistically significant impact. Our adjustment using results from an alternative model that includes the larger number of students yields a positive annual impact of for-profit management on math performance of 12 percent of a standard deviation, 29 percent of a year's worth of learning.

The estimated average annual impact on reading performance of for-profit management relative to district management is a positive 10 percent of a standard deviation, approximately 36 percent of a year's worth of reading. However, that impact is not statistically significant. The adjusted impact was just 4 percent of a standard deviation, about 14 percent of a year's worth of learning.

The differential impact of for-profit and nonprofit management is especially sizable. Using the estimates given above, students in schools under for-profit management gained between 70 percent and greater than a full year's worth of learning in math more each year than they would have had



The University of Pennsylvania is a Philadelphia icon.

the schools been under nonprofit management. All of these differences are statistically significant. In reading, students learned approximately two-thirds of a year more in a for-profit school than they would have had the school been under nonprofit management. All but one of the differences are statistically significant.

Taking Back Five Schools

Our analysis provides compelling evidence that schools do much better under for-profit than under nonprofit management. Year after year, students learned substantially more in reading and math if they attended a school under for-profit rather than one under nonprofit management. Yet in 2008 the district reassumed control of only one school under nonprofit management while not renewing the contracts for five schools under for-profit management. To ascertain whether that decision had a strong educational basis in the district's own test-score database, we used the same methodology to estimate the impact on student learning of the five schools for which the for-profit management contract had been terminated.

The results are mixed but provide little support for the district's decisions. The reading performance of students at the five schools was, on average, 18 percent of a standard deviation below what could have been expected had the schools been under district management, a difference that is statistically significant in three of the six years. Also, nonprofit schools whose contracts were not revoked had an impact on reading performance that was 10 percent of a standard deviation more positive than that of the for-profit schools whose contracts were terminated. However, that difference is not statistically significant in any year.

Math performance of students at the for-profit schools was 35 percent of a standard deviation higher than would have been the case had the schools been under district management. Also, it was 56 percent of a standard deviation higher than would have been the case had the schools been under nonprofit management. Those large differences are statistically significant in most years.

Our results indicate that nonprofits outperformed the five for-profits in reading in five out of six years, although the difference was only 3 percent of a standard deviation in 2008, and in no year were the differences statistically significant. In math, the five for-profits had strongly positive impacts in all years, while the nonprofits had decidedly negative ones, leading to very large, statistically significant differences between the two groups of schools in all years. The large differences in math clearly offset the statistically insignificant differences in reading.

If the Philadelphia school district cares only about reading results, and places no weight on math results, our data could be used to support the policy choice that was made, provided no attention is paid to the statistical insignificance of the reading finding. But if the two subjects are given equal weight in evaluating a school, our results provide no support for the decisions made by the school district with respect to renewing for-profit and nonprofit management contracts.

Discussion

Care should be taken before generalizing from the Philadelphia experience concerning the relative advantage of for-profit and nonprofit management. It is possible that for-profit entities have a greater vested interest in enhancing student achievement, because only in that way are they likely to survive over the longer run. But other factors in Philadelphia could easily account for the same result. The two main for-profit providers had much more experience with school management than did any of the nonprofit organizations. The nonprofits seem to have been selected more for their strong political ties than for any history of effectiveness at delivering educational services. Others have reported that newly formed charter schools under both for-profit and nonprofit management appear to become more effective as they gain in experience. That could easily account for the pattern of results reported here. Still, it is disconcerting to discover that impacts of non-profits compared unfavorably with those of the for-profits six years after the intervention began, presumably a long enough period for a new school manager to learn from experience.

Paul E. Peterson, director of the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG), is editor-in-chief of Education Next. Matthew M. Chingos is a PEPG research fellow.

The Education Factor

*Schooling once drove the nation's rise to the top,
but things have changed, unfortunately*

The Race between Education and Technology

By Claudia Goldin and
Lawrence F. Katz

Belknap Press, 2008, \$39.95; 496 pages.

As reviewed by Daniel Gross

Many of the briefs for American exceptionalism, from de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* to Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*, focus on the nation's political and economic systems. Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, two historically minded economists, advance the claim that America has followed a path of development unique among nations by rapidly building a comprehensive education system. Ultimately, they argue, America surged to global preeminence and created immense, widespread wealth by turning what was once the province of the elite into a utility for the masses. "That the twentieth century was both the American Century and the Human Capital Century is no historical accident," the authors write. "The nation that invested the most in education, and did much of that investment during the century in which education would critically matter, was the nation that had the highest level of per capita income."

Goldin and Katz delineate the historical process through which technology and education encouraged economic growth. It's not quite a dialectic, but more of a race "between the growth in the demand for skills driven by technological advances and the growth in the supply of skills driven by demographic change, educational investment choices, and immigration." But the story of the race is also a cautionary tale of how progress has stalled in the past 30 years, contributing to corrosive inequality and "late twentieth-century angst."

Goldin, professor of economics at Harvard, and Katz, a Harvard professor of economics who worked as chief economist at the Labor Department, cover subjects that generate a great deal of cable-news and op-ed-page heat, such as the stagnation of incomes and the failures of public education. But partisans expecting to have their biases confirmed won't find much succor here. The book's conclusions are based not on talking points but on deep dives into data, like the 1915 Iowa Census, and much considered number crunching.

The story starts in the early 19th century, when the "virtues" of the American education system took shape. By virtues, Goldin and Katz mean "a set of characteristics that originated in basic democratic and egalitarian principles and that influenced the educational system." Among them were public funding, decentralization, the separation of church and state, an open and forgiving structure, and a lack of gender bias. The result: "By the middle of the nineteenth century the United States had the most educated youth in the world."

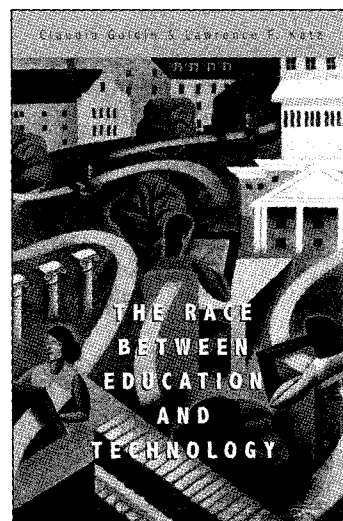
When most of those youths were working on the farm, all that elementary education didn't give America much of an edge. But at the turn of the 20th century, the introduction of electricity and the widespread adoption of capital-intensive technologies boosted the demand for skilled mechanics, technicians, clerks—people who could read manuals and do algebra. By 1920, Goldin

and Katz found, more than one-quarter of workers had jobs in occupations for which a high school or college education was expected. This change spurred the wholesale construction and development of a post-elementary school system. By 1940, 70 percent of American youths were enrolled in high school. The result of the rapidly expanding supply of high-school-educated workers was, ironically, a diminishing return on the investment. In the first half of the 20th century, the high school wage premium, the amount of money high school graduates earned greater than those who hadn't graduated, declined.

Americans didn't respond to such diminished returns by cutting back on education. Quite the opposite. The revolution in high school education was closely followed by a rapid expansion in higher education. About 4 percent of those born in 1900 would graduate from a four-year college; 24 percent of those born in 1950 would. Once again, the rising supply of alumni helped shrink the wage premium that accrued to those with college educations. And so in the middle decades of the 20th century, the U.S. experienced excel-

lent economic growth without noticeable increases in inequality.

But the uniquely American process of expanding educational achievement and income compression ground to a halt in the 1970s. High school graduation rates stopped rising, and college completion rates—for decades the envy of the world—haven't kept pace with those of many other developed countries



For three decades, Americans, who have generally shown themselves to be rational economic actors, haven't been pursuing the profitable path of education in sufficient numbers.

"Clearly, the United States no longer leads the world in the education of young adults," the authors write. More worrisome, and not coincidentally, productivity growth has sagged and income inequality has spiked to levels not seen since the 1920s. How are these phenomena related? It's a simple matter of supply and demand, explain Goldin and Katz. In the past 30 years, the demand for workers with a college education (driven in large part by advances in technology) has continued to rise steadily, but supply hasn't kept up. From 1960 to 1980, they write, the relative supply of college

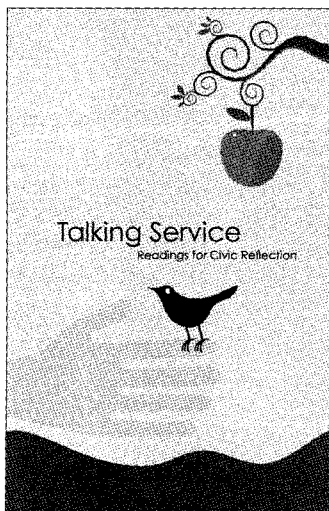
workers rose 3.77 percent per year, but between 1980 and 2005 it rose just 2 percent annually. The result: a rising premium for college-educated workers. "Overall, simple supply and demand specifications do a remarkable job of explaining the long-run evolution of the college wage premium." Thus the imperative is to increase the supply of better-educated workers by improving education, starting with preschool and ending with more financial aid for college students.

It's a compelling argument that masterfully applies cool reason and

data to hot-button contemporary issues. But one may wonder whether the complex question can be so easily reduced to the supply and demand of college-educated workers. For example, many economists believe the rapid influx of comparatively less-educated foreign immigrants has been a factor in suppressing wage growth at the lower end of the income scale (and hence in increasing inequality). Goldin and Katz characterize any impact from immigration as "a small drag," and "modest compared with the changes for the native-born population." I put down the book thinking that the two highly rational economists hadn't grappled with some of the noneconomic forces that are contributing to depressed achievement. Consider this paradox: The economic returns to higher education are as good as they've been at any time in the past century. And yet for three decades, Americans, who have generally shown themselves to be rational economic actors, haven't been pursuing the profitable path of education in sufficient numbers. Clearly, there are deeply rooted social, psychological, and cultural factors that explain why significant portions of the population don't see the apparently obvious connection between education and economic well-being. If the solution to the problems of educational achievement were as simple as boosting financial aid and providing more funds to preschools, a few well-intentioned foundations could easily transform large chunks of the education system.

Daniel Gross, the author of several books on U.S. economic and business history, is a columnist at Newsweek.

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Finding the Right Remedy

When court-ordered magnet schools don't work, try charters

Complex Justice: The Case of Missouri v. Jenkins

By Joshua M. Dunn

University of North Carolina Press, 2008, \$37.50; 226 pages.

As reviewed by Nathan Glazer

If there are any school districts still under tight federal supervision of efforts to desegregate schoolchildren, more than a half century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, one does not hear of them. With the present posture of the Supreme Court it is unlikely any would be so hampered if an appeal against court supervision were carried that far. But until recently, school districts did operate under such supervision, often for decades after a case had originally been brought, and long after the original conditions that had motivated the case had radically changed. The Kansas City, Missouri, case, known through its long legal history as *Jenkins v. State of Missouri*, was perhaps the most notorious of the tortured efforts to overcome state-sanctioned segregation.

It was notorious for many reasons: First, the court ordered enormous state and city expenditures, intending to attract white schoolchildren from the suburbs to the Kansas City schools so as to provide the minimum number of white children that proponents of desegregation considered necessary for a desegregated or "unitary" school. Second, it was an extreme example of how our legal order permits judges, and unrepresentative plaintiff lawyers, to decide how to run schools in the effort to eliminate the evil of segregation. Third, it eventually demonstrated the wide gap between what the courts and the lawyers advising them thought

was necessary to improve the educational achievement of black students, and what the black community thought necessary and desirable in the education of their children.

Most cases in school segregation began when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or another group sued a school system for failure to overcome segregation. In Kansas City, uniquely, it was the school district itself that sued. In Missouri, and some other states, state-required separation of schoolchildren by race ended shortly after the Supreme Court decision in 1954. Indeed, Kansas City had received effusive praise for its voluntary compliance from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, from *Time* magazine, and from *The Nation*.

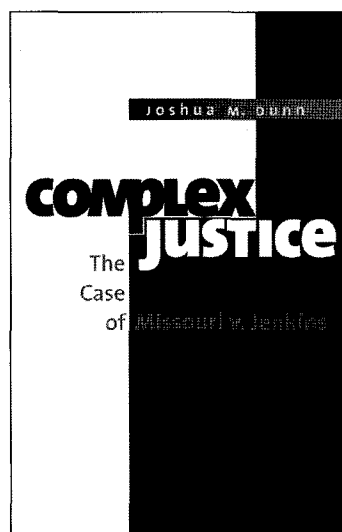
But a good deal had changed between 1954 and 1977, when the Kansas City Metropolitan School District (KCMSD) brought its case. Eighteen percent minority in 1954, the schools were more than 60 percent minority in 1977. Blacks were moving into cities; whites with schoolchildren were disproportionately moving to suburbs outside city boundaries. Some whites undoubtedly moved because they resisted sending their children to schools with a majority of blacks, some moved because they economically were able to and preferred the suburbs, and some feared growing urban crime in the 1960s and 1970s. Whatever the reasons, in large urban school districts, which encompassed

an ever-larger proportion of black children, the only way to achieve desegregation was through busing away from neighborhood schools, a remedy approved by the Supreme Court in 1971, unpopular almost everywhere, and often ineffective as white schoolchildren could move to private schools or to the suburbs.

The KCMSD—with its schools in disrepair, without what it considered adequate funding, and having endured damaging teacher strikes—took the ingenious route of suing the state, suburban school districts, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and

other federal government agencies for its inability to desegregate majority black schools. The case came up before Judge Russell Clark, born 1 of 10 siblings in rural southwestern Missouri, educated in a one-room schoolhouse, and appointed by President Jimmy Carter. In 1984, after a "tortuous" seven-year discovery process and a six-month trial, Judge Clark dismissed all the defendants except the state of Missouri, and

"realigned" the KCMSD as a defendant along with the state. Apparently a federal judge can turn a plaintiff into a defendant. But since the KCMSD was no longer the plaintiff, who in our adversary legal system was to represent the new plaintiffs, now presumably the black students? The NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the American Civil Liberties Union, all turned down the opportunity. Then stepped forward Arthur Benson, a committed



liberal lawyer who was to live with the case and, together with Judge Clark, shape it, for the next 20 years or so.

Judge Clark found the state and the school district liable for segregation, and then the issue became, what was the remedy? Kansas City schools were already predominantly minority, and the Supreme Court had ruled in the Detroit case that surrounding school districts not found guilty of segregation could not be pulled into a case to provide more white students for desegregation. The approach that was developed, with the advice of education-school professors, was to create "magnet" programs, which it was hoped could draw white children from Kansas City suburbs. The judge, following the experts, decreed the rebuilding of many schools for the purpose of making them attractive to the hoped-for suburban children, an expensive enterprise. And here the chief characteristic of this case emerged: The judge, in effect, imposed higher taxes on Kansas City, and on the state, to build the new magnet schools. The appeals court and the Supreme Court (by a bare 5 to 4) approved. The figures that eventually were spent in this effort to make the schools more attractive reached, in author Joshua Dunn's estimate, \$2 billion. That may not appear to be much these days, when a single failed firm may gobble up \$85 billion in government money, but recall that this was a school district, in 1984, of 37,000 students (it had fallen from 51,000 at the beginning of the case), with a budget of less than \$100 million.

The distinctive contribution of Dunn's book is to emphasize the degree to which the district judge was not acting arbitrarily (though to some

degree he was), but was constrained in what he could do by an appeals court following Supreme Court decisions. Judge Clark had to find the KCMUSD schools "segregated," according to these higher-court decisions, and had to respond, limited by the Supreme Court decision that he could not require the suburbs to participate. Magnet schools with elaborate facilities to attract suburban white children was the answer proposed by the education experts, supported by the

"Legal doctrine asserted the problem was racial isolation. The black community asserted it was substandard education."

plaintiff lawyer, and implemented by the judge. It did not sit well with the black community, which by the 1980s, certainly the '90s, was more interested in getting better education for black children than in following the will-o'-the-wisp of integration. It found the magnet school approach mystifying and infuriating. Slavic studies? A classical Greek curriculum? That is not what our children need! And even when parents and children were interested in the magnets, they were limited in getting admission because the judge had decreed there must be four whites for every six blacks in each magnet school, and often too few whites were available to expand the black quota. Despite huge expenditure, integration was not much advanced.

Finally, the Supreme Court, responding to one of many state appeals, decreed in 1995 by a 5-4 vote that Judge Clark could not impose a program of magnet schools to attract white students from the suburbs. The district remained under judicial supervision, but by then black community leaders controlled the school district, which reinstituted neighborhood schools. Judge Clark's successor, a Reagan appointee, finally succeeded in dismissing the case in 2003. Attorney Benson, still on the case, opposed the dismissal.

The schools seemed as dysfunctional at the end as they had appeared at the beginning. But by this time, the state had approved charter schools, and substantial numbers of Kansas City's black schoolchildren were patronizing them. In 2005-06, some 26,000 children attended the public schools, 6,000 the charter schools.

Dunn's final word: "The court and the black community disagreed on what the problems were. Legal doctrine asserted the problem was racial isolation. The black community asserted it was substandard education." Dunn's contribution is to show that the issue was not an imperial judiciary that wished to reshape the schools, but a course of successful litigation in which the concentration of black children, whatever the cause, became the only target at which the courts could aim. But in the end one wonders why the Supreme Court, which the appeals courts and district judges had to follow, was so slow in recognizing the impracticality of all the measures available to try to achieve integration in major cities with large black communities.

Nathan Glazer is professor emeritus of education and sociology at Harvard University.

More Money for Less Accountability?

I don't think so!

Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right

By Richard Rothstein, Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder

Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press, 2008, \$19.95; 263 pages.

As reviewed by Chester E. Finn Jr.

Some may take this wrong-headed book seriously, given the credentials of lead author Richard Rothstein, former *New York Times* education columnist, all-around smarty, and veteran maneuverer on the education-policy chessboard. Its timing is deft, too, as it savages the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and offers recommendations for its overhaul (overthrow, really) just as a new administration and Congress face its reauthorization.

Rothstein and a pair of junior colleagues advance three central theses, all of which are wrong—though they'll appeal to a strange alliance of progressive educators and (up to a point) conservative Republicans.

First, and most NCLB-relevant, "We should get the federal government out of the business of monitoring education at the school or student level." But it's not just Uncle Sam who should quit judging performance by students (and schools and districts) via "short-term test score measures of basic skills." So, too, should the states. The authors view all such accountability measures as agents of educational corruption.

That's because, thesis two, education has in their judgment eight "fundamental goals," of which "basic academic knowledge and skills in reading, writing, math, science and history" are but one. The others include physical

and emotional health, social skills, work ethic, appreciation of the arts, and community responsibility. These are equally important, insist the authors, and must all be incorporated into any self-respecting accountability system.

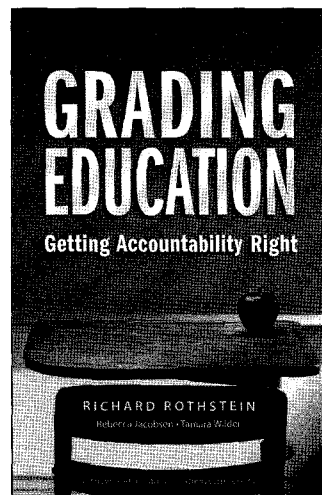
Third, they want NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, rolled back to a reporting system that contains no standards or cut scores, only a numeric scale that nobody understands. At the same time, they would widen its subject coverage to span all eight "fundamental goals," employing "performance assessments" of various sorts to appraise progress in areas unsuited to paper-and-pencil testing.

This is not just wrong-headed; it's dangerous. It plays into the hands of union-backed efforts to exonerate schools from responsibility for student achievement. It aligns with a faction within the Democratic Party (and some key Obama advisors) as they seek to gut standards-based reform in general and NCLB in particular. It also appeals to the yearning of some GOP lawmakers and libertarian policy wonks to get Uncle Sam completely out of the school-accountability business (though they'll gag on Rothstein's demand for buckets more in federal dollars for those unaccountable schools and sundry other services to kids). And it would leave educators, policymakers, and parents with fewer navigational aids as they try to determine whether American students and schools are making progress in a competitive world.

It's true that NCLB's laser-like focus on reading and math skills in grades 3 through 8 encourages schools to concentrate their resources and teachers their energies on those subjects. It's also true that the law's use of a single proficiency "cut score" to judge school performance discourages attention to kids who are already succeeding—and those so far below proficiency as to have little chance of getting there. Dozens of other NCLB critics have reached similar conclusions, and scads of proposals for that law's rewrite offer remedies, such as including more subjects in the accountability system and giving schools credit for student growth across the achievement spectrum.

Rothstein is correct, as well, that NCLB's reliance on states to define "proficiency" however they like has produced wildly discrepant results across the land. (It escapes me why he then urges that states be placed in sole charge of school standards and accountability with no federal involvement at all.) But he draws a bizarre link between that problem and his scorn for NAEP's achievement levels, wrongly asserting that the National Assess-

ment Governing Board's decision to fix the "proficient" level at an ambitious "aspirational" level was folded into NCLB's mandate to states to set their own proficiency targets. That's crazy. Had Congress and the White House had the political guts in 2001 to use NAEP, rather than states' own inconsistent standards, as the primary No Child Left Behind benchmark, we'd



If the authors were to prevail, NAEP would become blurry and weak, standards-based reform would nearly vanish.

have avoided some of today's woes, including the paltry aspirations promulgated by many states.

The authors' misunderstanding of NAEP is comprehensive, however, as is the harm that would be done were it to be reshaped to their liking. They yearn for a NAEP-that-never-was, rattling on for 20 nostalgic pages about the glories of a 45-year-old plan prepared by a high-status committee of educators chaired by the late Ralph Tyler, most of which was ignored from day one by Congress, the executive branch, and the National Assessment Governing Board.

Rothstein ardently dislikes the board's execution of a 1988 statutory mandate to establish "appropriate student performance levels for each age and grade in each subject area to be tested" under the National Assessment. (That's the correct language; Rothstein

misquotes it.) The board, on which I served for eight years and chaired for two (though Rothstein also misstates how I got there, apparently not knowing that board members are appointed by the secretary of education, not the president), after gathering extensive advice from every quarter, opted to set three such levels and to designate the second of those "proficient." After gathering tons more advice as to what method to use for applying those levels to actual assessments, the board settled on a process named (sorry about this) the "modified Angoff method." And to make a long story short, the terminology, the method, and the changed way of reporting NAEP results have been under fire ever since from analysts and educators, even as they've gained traction in the real world.

Those performance levels turned out to be as useful to policymakers, parents, and journalists—a true gauge of student progress at the state and national levels, the closest America has yet come to any sort of national standards—as they are unloved by some experts. Note, though, that critics such as Rothstein never suggest a *better* way of setting such levels. They just don't like this one, or don't want any standards in the first place, preferring the inscrutable "scale score" reporting system that renders no judgments about "how good is good enough."

If the authors were to prevail, NAEP would become blurry and weak, standards-based reform would nearly vanish, and NCLB would be undone rather than revamped. Let us hope that right-thinking people, encouraged by this review, will see the errors of Rothstein et al. and opt to ignore them.

Chester E. Finn Jr. is president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and senior editor of Education Next.

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Home Schooling Goes Mainstream
BY MILTON GAITHER

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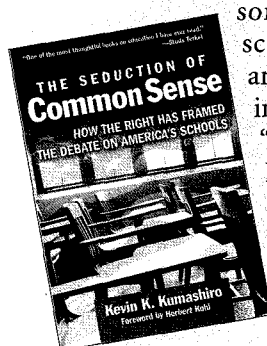
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Straddling the Gap

BOOK ALERT

The Seduction of Common Sense: How the Right Has Framed the Debate on America's Schools. Kevin K. Kumashiro (Teachers College Press). This is a book that does not live up to its provocative title. For sure, some of the author's analysis rings true: K-12 education reformers



sometimes try to scare the public and policymakers into action (think "A Nation at Risk"), and the Right may use the language of a "strict father" when arguing for testing, standards, and sanctions for failing schools. But Kumashiro comes from such a Far Left perspective (the book is part of a series edited by none other than bomber turned ed school professor William Ayers) that the thrust of his arguments is easily marginalized. In the author's conspiracy-laden world, the Right works to "maintain the status quo, particularly its hierarchies and privileges" and to "undermine public education." Vouchers, charter schools, testing, alternative certification, and other now-mainstream reforms are part of this broad effort to eliminate the public schools and oppress poor people. This puts Kumashiro into a bit of a bind, as he is forced to admit that there are some on the Left who support these ideas, too. Only those on the Right, however, support these positions for *nefarious* reasons. The author ties himself in similar knots when it comes to

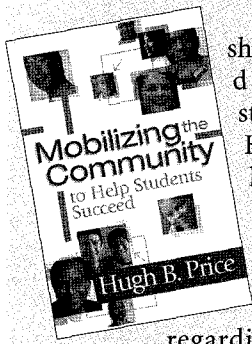
efforts to close the achievement gap, which he sees as "a strategic move by the Right," as it "masks the other ways that oppression plays out in schools," such as "the structural racism that is exemplified in the historical, economic, and curricular causes of inferior education for students of color." Readers will learn a little bit about "the Right" by reading this book, but much, much more about the loopy Left.

Real Leaders, Real Schools: Stories of Success Against Enormous Odds. Gerald C. Leader with Amy F. Stern (Harvard Education Press). The great frustration of books about heroic principals "succeeding against enormous odds," five of whom are vividly and admiringly profiled here, is that the U.S. has constructed a public education system in which a strong school leader with a successful school is the exception rather than the rule. There's no shortage of such books and every reason to welcome another one in this genre (penned by an emeritus Boston University professor fittingly named Leader, who runs his own Leadership Institute). But there's a woe-of such principals and schools. The subjects of this volume are five former principals in the Boston Public Schools over the past two decades.



The "odds" despite which they succeeded are familiar in large urban districts: changing pupil demographics, set-in-their-ways teachers ill prepared for these unfamiliar students, leadership vacuums, tight budgets, rigid bureaucracies, unhelpful parents, inadequate data systems, new standards, external accountability testing, and so on. Despite all that, these men and women started smart, built teams, used data, "leveraged" the state testing program, selected their own staff, engaged parents, and more. Leader's concluding chapter, distilling 10 lessons from their examples, is insightful enough but frustrating just the same, because the lessons seem as obvious as they are helpful. Why do we build education systems in which adroit school leaders are rarities?

Mobilizing the Community to Help Students Succeed. Hugh B. Price (ASCD). Hugh Price, former head of the National Urban League, licensed attorney, and former editorial writer for the *New York Times*, begins by recalling that he thought it the mission of the Urban League to "galvanize communities to create a pervasive culture of achievement that celebrates and, yes, provides protective cover to achievers [and] that neutralizes negative peer pressures." That same no-illusions practicality runs through the whole of this little gem of a volume. Leaving grand designs aside, Price has penned a smart book about what teachers, schools, and communities can and



should do to help disadvantaged students succeed. He shares lessons learned by the military, advice that General Colin Powell once gave him

regarding the impor-

tance of rites of passage, and insights from the Urban League's Achievement Month initiatives. Price shares straightforward guidance on how schools can employ recognition and rituals and on what community groups should do. Refreshing is Price's blunt expectation that children can and will take responsibility for their actions, but only if responsible adults "bestir themselves to inspire them."

School Accountability, Autonomy, and Choice Around the World.

Ludger Woessmann, Elke Lude-mann, Gabriela Schutz, and Martin R. West (Edward Elgar).

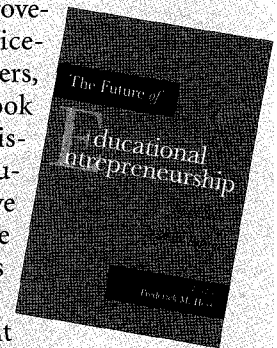
Education reforms based on accountability, autonomy, or choice became popular long before there was much hard evidence that they actually lead to better student performance. This book—short, dense, and likely to be particularly prized by those who love tables full of statistics, though the prose is very clear—is an important contribution to the growing collection of high-quality studies finding that greater accountability, autonomy, and choice do, indeed, make for a better education system and greater stu-

dent learning. The book also showcases an approach to learning from international evidence very different from simply sending researchers to Finland to observe Finnish math teachers in their classrooms. The research in the volume is based on data from the PISA 2003 international student achievement test taken by students in 37 countries. The authors—economists and a political scientist from the U.S. and Germany—have created a framework that controls for the effects of a large set of student, family, school, and country characteristics. They find that not only do greater accountability, autonomy, and choice (in various configurations) in a country's school system boost student achievement, they also boost noncognitive skills and increase equity (breaking the link between student achievement and socioeconomic status). Students perform better in countries with more choice and competition and in schools with both hiring autonomy and external exit exams. Incentives work around the globe, it turns out.

The Future of Educational Entrepreneurship: Possibilities for School Reform. Frederick M. Hess, ed. (Harvard Education Press).

This wide-ranging collection asks what it will take for educational entrepreneurship to foster broad improvement in American schooling. Editor Frederick Hess's introduction divides school reformers into two broad camps, finding each wanting. Capacity builders trust

troubled school districts to reform themselves from within, not noticing that it is typically new organizations that in other sectors generate breakthrough improvements. Choice-based reformers, in contrast, look outside of districts for solutions but have failed to see that "markets characterized by insufficient



quality-control mechanisms, a lack of transparency, a scarcity of human or investment capital, and harmful regulatory and institutional barriers are more likely to produce mediocrity than effective solutions." The essays that follow survey nascent "supply side" strategies to boost human capital, attract investment, control quality, improve research and development, and remove the political barriers that too often hinder the growth of new providers of educational services. Told their efforts have not been sufficient to transform the quality of American schooling, choice-based reformers may complain that Hess does not assign them due credit for advocating necessary changes. But they would do well to heed his call to ensure that greater competition in education in fact leads to more innovation and ultimately to improved quality.



The Anti-intellectual Environment of American Teens

Books and ideas have no deep impact

American Teen

As reviewed by Mark Bauerlein

Something in the achievement of American students doesn't add up. One-quarter of the students graduating from public high schools in 2007 took an Advanced Placement (AP) exam, up from 18 percent for the Class of 2002. College attendance is rising, along with the long-term economic benefits for earning a degree (see "The Education Factor," *book review*, page 71).

Why, then, do measures of student knowledge and skill, and college graduation rates, show no parallel gains? SAT scores have stagnated, as has the performance of 17-year-olds on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. And only 15 percent of those 2007 graduates had earned a passing grade of 3 or higher on any AP exam. With more challenging class time happening, and more students planning for college, more knowledge and academic success should follow, but they don't.

One explanation appears, of all places, in a high school movie from last summer, *American Teen*. The documentary film follows four kids through senior year in Warsaw, Indiana, each one a recognizable type. Upper-crust blond cheerleader Megan *must* get into Notre Dame, working-class basketball star Colin needs to keep his rebounds up if he wants a scholarship, artsy free spirit Hannah aims to make movies in California, and pimply nerd Jake, well, he's just gotta get a girlfriend. They're good kids, minors hooking up and breaking up, to be sure, playing video games and texting puerile messages, but they ponder their futures with dreadful seriousness.

Yes, Colin admits, he never does homework, Megan draws an obscenity on a classmate's window, Hannah can't bear to return to school after a boyfriend dumps her, and Jake gets drunk in Tijuana. Social life is intense, and tribal rituals of adolescence are in play (such as the sly, sadistic circulation of a classmate's nude photo through the web), but they don't hate their parents or curse the Establishment.

Their striving and relative decency make a crucial aspect of their lives all the more disturbing. In 95 minutes of film, not a single book, artwork, historical figure, philosophy, scientific field, or political position comes up. And their teachers might as well be cashiers at McDonald's serving up meals, for all the influence they wield. Seniors spend six hours a day

in English, history, biology, calculus, civics, etc., and their futures depend on how well they do. Outside of class, though, the curriculum doesn't exist. Novels, past heroes and villains, foreign affairs, metaphysical ideas, Darwin, the Constitution...they mean nothing. Students don't even complain about them. When Hannah explains that she wants to make movies because she wants people to remember her and her work long after she's dead, she doesn't realize the sad irony of her statement, for she never cites a single film or filmmaker who inspired her. She remembers nobody.

History, literature, civics, and science are for coursework, that's all. It may be that few high school students have ever been enthralled with books, ideas, and fine art, but never has the rejection been so complete, even among the ambitious ones heading to college. The U.S. Department of Education reports that the percentage of seniors who read on their own "almost every day" dropped from 31 percent in 1984 to 22 percent in 2004. Back in the 1980s, according to the American Freshmen Survey, not even 40 percent of them spent less than one hour a week talking to a teacher outside of class, but by the mid-'90s the rate surpassed 50 percent and has stayed there ever since.

How regrettable that none of them realizes that history, literature, science, and civics offer not only knowledge for school but resources to manage the vagaries of adolescence. Commiserating with a buddy after a breakup helps, but so does reading about Gatsby and his dream. Learning about how Mendeleev arranged the elements might grant a reprieve from the way sophomores take seats in the cafeteria. The heroism of George Washington sets the aura of the popular crowd in welcome perspective.

But not for these kids. Books and ideas have no deep impact. Learning signifies only homework, grades, and admissions, nothing personal, and so all they have is each other. Reality is immediate, selfhood based on peer review. No wonder knowledge and skills haven't kept pace with coursework: once the courses end, students have no motive to retain what they have learned.

Mark Bauerlein is professor of English and director of the Program in Democracy and Citizenship at Emory University.

The Passing of a Gentle Giant

A personal tribute to John Brandl

BY PATRICK WOLF

The education reform community lost a champion in August when John E. Brandl died of cancer on the eve of his 71st birthday. John was many things in his lifetime: gas station attendant, Army ROTC officer, Harvard-trained economist, McNamara "Whiz Kid," Deputy Assistant Secretary for Education in the Johnson administration, Minnesota state legislator, professor, dean of public affairs, scholar, author, mentor, husband, father, and friend to many. He is best known in education reform circles as the sponsor of legislation to develop and expand

school choice in Minnesota, especially the nation's first law charter school. In 2005 he received the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation Excellence in Education Prize for Valor and was saluted as the "godfather of school choice."

He was my godfather as well, in fact and deed if not formally in name. My mother and he grew up in the same neighborhood in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and remained close friends their entire lives. I first met John on March 24, 1965, when I was two weeks old and John was starting to explore strategies of education reform at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. One of my uncles was named my godfather but was unable to attend the baptism. John stepped into the role, supposedly just for that day, and never stepped out of it. That was John.

When I was 13, I had a seemingly unquenchable thirst for knowledge about American history, politics, and public policy. My mom confessed to John that she was having great difficulty "feeding the beast" of my interests. John had a simple solution, "Put him on a bus to the Twin Cities and I will take him with me to the legislature." John was a state representative and a member of the Democrat-Farmer-Labor (DFL) majority at that time. In the morning he gave me a tour of the state Capitol and allowed me to sit in on a DFL strategy session. John and I then had lunch with the Speaker of the House, Harry Sieben. It was the penultimate day of the legislative session, so dozens of important bills came up for a vote in the afternoon. John found me a seat on the House floor and set me up with a copy of "House Orders" so that I could follow the action. For a social studies nerd like me, this was heaven.

John was an accomplished scholar as well as a lawmaker. Although he was an economist by training, the ideas that drove him were primarily Madisonian and Tocquevillian.



PHOTO / AUTHOR

Human needs are best satisfied by and within community institutions such as families and churches.

From Madison, John took the idea that the worse angels of our nature need to be checked and the better angels encouraged through government-designed incentive systems. From Tocqueville he drew the insight that human needs are best satisfied by and within community institutions such as families and churches. Parental school choice fit perfectly within John's intellectual framework for effective service delivery, and he championed all forms of it—vouchers, charters, tax credits, magnet schools, and open enrollment—throughout his academic and policymaking career, knowing full well that his outspoken support for this policy would limit his ability to rise through the ranks of his party.

In June, more than 300 of John's family members and friends converged on the Humphrey Institute in Minneapolis for a dinner in his honor. A common theme of the tribute speeches was how John was a master at disagreeing with someone without being disagreeable. He never backed down from a fight but he also never disparaged his opponent. In his eyes, all people were equally

dignified human beings and wondrous gifts from God, even if they didn't share his point of view.

I was blessed to have a final telephone conversation with John Brandl four days before he died. I wanted to share something special with this man who had shared so much with so many. I told him, "John, you probably know that you taught me a lot about how to be a public policy scholar. What you may not know is that you also taught me how to be a man."

Rest in peace, my friend. We, on the other hand, still have work to do.

Patrick Wolf is professor of education reform at the University of Arkansas.

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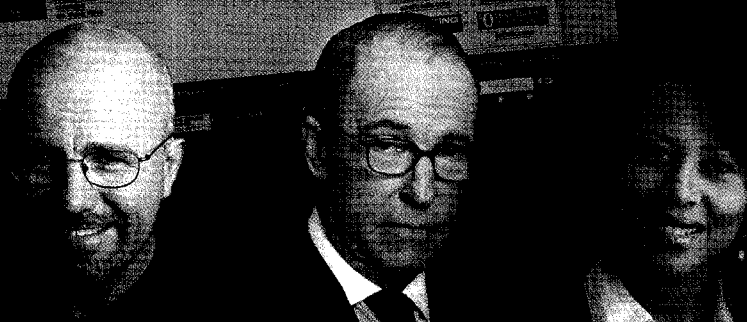
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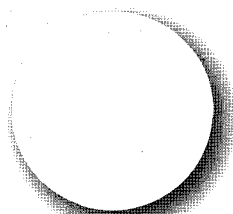
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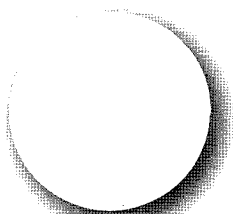
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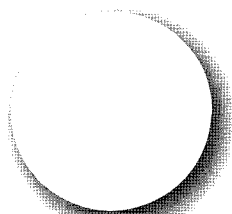
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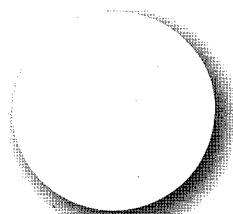
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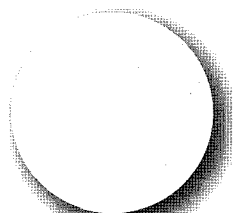
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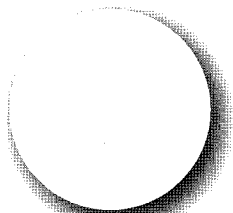
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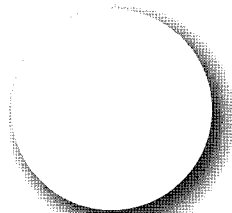
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